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IN THE WAKE OF THE  
GOOSE STEP

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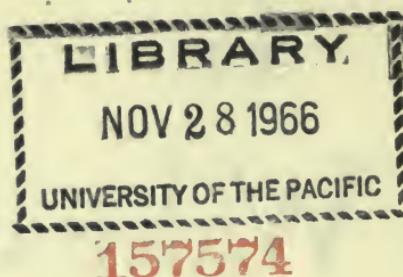
In  
the Wake of  
the  
Goose Step

BY FILIPPO BOJANO

*Translated from the Italian by*  
GERALD GRIFFIN



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CLOUDY DAWN	1
II. LIVING DANGEROUSLY	24
III. CAESARS AMONG THEM	52
IV. OBSERVATION POST	74
V. THE FEAR OF COURAGE	92
VI. TOWARDS THE ADVENTURE	116
VII. WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORESEEN	141
VIII. BEFORE THE RED KREMLIN	171
IX. THE RETURN OF THE ARGONAUT	197
X. THE LESSON OF AFRICA	222
XI. AN INGLORIOUS SUNSET	244
XII. TOWARDS THE FUTURE	267





## I. CLOUDY DAWN

ONE DEPRESSING FOGGY JANUARY MORNING IN 1929 I LEFT Arnaldo Mussolini's office in the Via Moscow in Milan, on my way to inform my relatives and friends of my imminent journey to the German capital, to take up the job of political correspondent on the daily, *Popolo d'Italia*, which, as everybody knows, belonged to the Duce and was the most important organ of the Fascist régime. I had no premonition of many things that were to happen. To begin with, I could not foresee that this would be the longest and most momentous of all exiles, that I was to remain in Germany for the greatest part of my working life, and that Fate was about to cast my lot amid happenings that were destined to be of historic significance. Today circumstances no longer make such protracted spells of service necessary, but at that period and in the decades before it, it frequently happened that a journalist was allowed to grow old in a foreign country in one permanent job, termed in journalistic jargon "a position of trust." Such journalists were regarded, so to speak, as fixed and changeless institutions in foreign lands, and often died in exile, utterly forgotten.

I had only just returned from Spain, Hungary and the United States, with my mind a jumble of visions and prob-

lems, and by almost a miracle had escaped joining Nobile's expedition to the North Pole, in which another journalist, a younger man who went instead of me, sacrificed his life. Perhaps it was the fact that I had escaped from such a dramatic end that made me look upon this tragic incident as a warning, and induced me to accept the offer of a transfer to Berlin and to give up my nomadic career.

It was not my first trip to Berlin. I had been there twice before, the first time with Italo Balbo, who was making feverish preparations for his aeronautical voyages, on two of which I had the pleasure of accompanying him. I had also a number of acquaintances in Berlin, who had followed the time-honored custom of initiating me into the varied, noisy and cosmopolitan life of the great metropolis. But this time things were changed. I had come to Berlin to work.

What was the little that I could then accomplish in comparison with the experience which I was destined to accumulate during twelve years! I can smile today, looking back at it all. What callow inexperience in those early days marked my journalistic judgment, and what doubts cramped my style as a political correspondent! Germany seemed to me like an inextinguishable volcano. She had lost a war, and in spite of that, or rather for that very reason, the eyes of all nations were focused on her; she kept people continuously talking about her, and by her dangerous insistence forced many statesmen to work themselves into hysterics in their efforts to guarantee nations the longest possible period of reconstructive peace. Crushed and humiliated by her defeat, Germany still continued to be a source of uncertainty and danger. Not being a state on the outer fringe of our continent, and not regarding herself as a conquered and subjugated nation which could easily be subdued; feeling, moreover, convinced that her temporary collapse was due to incidental factors which did not imply

military inferiority, the German nation made extreme caution essential in the application of the peace clauses, and any relaxation of the vigilance of the victors was out of the question. In short, Germany was a serious source of anxiety for the European chancelleries.

The victors never felt quite secure, although they made a brave show at Versailles and at Geneva, and sometimes seemed to cherish the illusion that they had rendered their age-long enemy innocuous for a considerable number of years. Clemenceau wore himself out with the eternal obsession that he was leaving his successors a task which was almost impossible to carry out. He had a premonition that a second, more serious, conflagration was bound to come, and left a legacy of similar anxiety to the men who took his place in a France over which a sword of Damocles was ever hanging. In London the same state of affairs existed, because the various Governments that followed one another never lost sight of Berlin. The only difference was that the British rulers thought that they could keep the wild beast quiet by wise diplomacy.

What was the attitude of Germany during those years just after the war? Was the revolution which she had undergone in exchanging her imperial and autocratic constitution for a republican and democratic one a genuinely radical and fundamental change, or was it merely a provisional metamorphosis—a surgical operation, which did not heal the national malady, but merely lessened its virulence for a short spell? Was Germany's new policy sincere in its assertion that she desired to take her place in the vast scheme of general European reconstruction, and that she had stifled her age-old imperialistic yearnings, and was anxious to establish harmonious relations with the rest of Europe? Everything seemed to indicate that this assumption was correct. Apart from the moral grievance which Germany, at

any rate, openly proclaimed—and for which she did not succeed in obtaining redress—that she had been arraigned as guilty before the great tribunal of history—the Reich seemed to adapt itself to its new destiny. It could be regarded as quite natural that at Geneva Stresemann fought to the best of his ability and with great vehemence to secure a remission for his nation of a part of the material grievances imposed at Versailles, and first of all, to get the burden of German Reparations reduced. Any statesman would have adopted a similar attitude in defense of his country. For it can be affirmed that the German revival began with Stresemann, because it was he who rendered to Germany the first priceless services that enabled her to raise her head again. The Nazis were wrong in their anxiety to consign to oblivion the very name, as well as the work, of this first genuine German patriot; they should have revered him as their standard-bearer.

In my opinion, Stresemann should have been placed at the top of the roll of those men who devoted their lives to the restoration of Germany to her former greatness, and who took the first effective steps in that direction. And if Stresemann played the role of the tractable man, of the astute diplomat, of the man who, at the table of the League of Nations, succeeded in pitting his own logical acumen against the mordant wit of Briand; and if it might be said that he joined the ranks of the liberal rebuilders of European fame; it should be observed that it would have been impossible for him to have acted differently. The German rulers of that period had no other choice, with a Germany incapable of evolving a Prussian and military policy in the true sense of the word. The wound was still bleeding; the German people were split into the countless ideologies which were the aftermath of the revolution, and they were too disorganized. But political critics throughout the Reich

put their fingers on the sore when they asserted that Germany had not been conquered—that is to say, that she had not been beaten in the field, but that it was the disintegration of the Home Front that had led to the general collapse. There was something very symptomatic in this assertion, for it meant that since they did not consider themselves beaten, the German people would some day put the matter to the test again—a culmination which in reality nobody ruled out, but which everybody thought was still far away in the dim future.

When I arrived in Germany a long time had already elapsed since the date of the famous Weimar Constitution. Ebert's, Rathenau's and Scheidemann's Governments were cyclones that came and went. Even the saddler Ebert forgot, as time went on, his revolutionary tendencies. Governments of various types ran their courses with their respective chancellors, from Social Democratic to Catholic Center, and Germany slowly reverted to her Prussian outlook. The Leander division assumed the proportions of an administrative detail, and the French Government made a great show of endorsing the division of the Reich into two parts, a northern and a southern, while keeping an embassy at Berlin, and a legation at Munich. The Republic of Weimar stretched from the Baltic to the Alps, and it had a uniform policy which aimed, firstly, to maintain at all costs under all governments national unity, and, secondly, to try to reduce to zero the Versailles sanctions. On those two points, despite their parliamentary squabbles, all parties were in full agreement.

For example, to my great astonishment, shortly after my arrival, I read that the Communist party in the Reichstag had voted for the allocation of the money needed for laying down the first post-war armored cruiser. The Communists, when it was a question of attacking the Right, were most

emphatic and uncompromising radicals, but they would not allow themselves to be deprived of the glory of doing their share towards the rearmament of Germany. The basic cause of that long struggle which went on in the Reich between 1920 and 1933 was solely the acquisition of power. The Left fought the Right and vice versa, following the normal rough and tumble of parliamentary struggle; on the other hand, some very strange alliances were formed, and such curious parliamentary proceedings took place that one was forced to ask oneself if the whole thing were not the performance of some farce.

The Right was already very powerful at that time although its membership was small. The National organization of Steel Helmets helped to swell its numbers. The Steel Helmets comprised, in addition to the ex-soldiers, all the most reactionary elements in the country, the conservative landowners, the industrial magnates, the junkers, and the traditionalists, the monarchists, and some of the Protestant clergy. All these diehards were loud in their denunciation of Stresemann, for it seemed to them that he made too many concessions to the Western Powers. They conjured up the specter of Reparations in colossal proportions, knowing perfectly well all the time that not one penny of those Reparations would ever be paid. It was even possible for them to make their influence felt with regard to the post of President of the Republic, and they were able to elect as Ebert's successor old Marshal von Hindenburg, the man who had been a loyal supporter of the Kaiser, a soldier, a Conservative of the first water, who knew just as much about politics as was consistent with his consciousness of being a native of East Prussia—the most German and Nationalist of the provinces of the Reich.

Any foreign correspondent who happened to be in Germany during those years had been instructed to consider a

meeting with Adolf Hitler as one of his chief professional duties. This man had become the most interesting figure in Germany. The echoes of his vehement philippics against the political system of the day rang through the whole nation and even resounded beyond its frontiers. His book *Mein Kampf* was the theme of discussions everywhere. Like a conflagration started by a sudden thunderbolt, Hitler's fame had been established even before he was backed by a majority.

The fact that in Italy through the initiative of another man, Benito Mussolini, a movement called Fascism had sprung up, and that this movement had been powerful enough to revolutionize completely the order of things in the peninsula, helped to evoke a still greater interest throughout the world in the activities of the new German leader. In short, Hitler was a sensational phenomenon, and to treat him as of no account, even in those early days, would have been journalistic suicide. American, English, and French correspondents had taken exceptional pains to get into contact with him. Special correspondents had come from the United States and from London for this very purpose.

Eventually, one day in Berlin at the Kaiserhof, I got the interview to which I had been looking forward so long. The chief of the Nazis said very little, and obviously felt great reluctance to talk about Mussolini and Fascism. The fact that Italy had very frequently intervened at Geneva through the medium of her representative in favor of a revision of the clause dealing with German Reparations, left him quite indifferent. He was tremendously amused by the accusation made by his political opponents that he had received funds from Mussolini to finance the Nazi movements in its infancy—an accusation which was proved to be baseless. He drew my attention to the fact that the last country in which

*Mein Kampf* had been published was Italy. He sarcastically emphasized the fact that Mussolini and Fascism and Italy had no real objective for the armaments which the Duce was piling up. Mussolini on the other hand, was constantly sneering at Nazism as a ridiculous plagiarism of Fascism; Italians were continually making jokes about Hitler's Charlie Chaplin moustache and his forelock straggling half-way down his forehead.

A period followed during which Hitler often invited me to accompany him in his electioneering and propaganda campaigns through the German provinces. We traveled at lightning speed by plane and motor-car, and I had to spend my leisure in these exhausting journeys followed by tedious demonstrations in the company of Dietrich, Hanfstaengl, Brueckner, Schaub, and the few others who constantly accompanied the Fuehrer. It was, however, an instructive experience, which gave me an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with men who were destined to hold important posts under the Nazi regime. Putzi Hanfstaengl always posed as having a very deep insight into Anglo-Saxon problems and Anglo-Saxon mentality. He was also considered by his companions to have a most profound all-round knowledge, but he was always silent when the conversation turned to Italy; it was obvious he knew nothing whatever about the country.

Brueckner, Schaub, and Sandemann were simply Hitler's bodyguard—fellows who spent their lives waiting for the moment when they could sit down at a table in a provincial restaurant to devour a luscious beef-steak and swill endless pints of beer. Hitler himself remained silent and motionless for hours on end when we were in an airplane, as if he were pondering on the tasks ahead of him. Every now and then he would emerge from his coma to stare fixedly at the aeronautical charts. He was almost always anxious that I should

be on the platform beside him at his meetings where I could see the seething masses of women who were becoming ever more and more mesmerized by him as they listened to every word he uttered, and kept up a prolonged orgy of cheering when he had finished. Strange to say, Hitler's first supporters came from the masses of the female electorate. His first and most enthusiastic audiences were women, and I am firmly convinced that the German women will be the last to admit that Hitler's political career has been disastrous to Germany.

In the beginning I shared Mussolini's view that Hitler had a frustrated mentality which was enslaved by futile abstract ideas, and that he was a demagogue who was really not very dangerous, reminiscent of certain visionaries who indulged in pompous empty nothings to which people listened without taking the trouble to follow their tortuous logic. But later I had to change my estimate of Hitler, even though I had not then heard the famous verdict given by the surgeon Sauerbruch. Sauerbruch, who is a scientist, and knew Hitler from the days of his first groping for power, maintained that the Fuehrer had latent symptoms of a dangerous type of semi-insanity. It was obvious that he had a program. Hitler showed that he was not only seeking results by means of the exposition of his doctrine, but already was revealing himself as a strategist in politics and a realist. The introductions to his speeches were always cloudy, but he came down to facts as he went on, and in his perorations he showed himself a skilful manoeuvrer, if not a diplomatist.

When mention of France arose, even in private conversation, Hitler, unlike many German politicians, appeared to regard that nation as of very little importance, either with regard to its political stability or its military strength. In those days Mussolini, too, used to joke about France, and speak of it as a decadent country, which could not face the

brunt of a new war. But Mussolini was ignorant of precise details, whereas Hitler spoke with a knowledge of cause and effect.

I saw immediately that this man would land us in a war, with the usual German thoroughness improved by a more perfect technique which would take past mistakes into account. The adventure could not end with the laying down of a few maxims, with pitiful mouthings in the Reichstag and on the radio, full of insults leveled at the democracies, or with such protests and ostentatious gestures as leaving the League of Nations and refusing to see Sir John Simon at Berlin. All this was like the prelude in some infernal orchestra to the violent action of the drama destined to follow sooner or later. A unique orchestra and a unique conductor! Sometimes the German people themselves, overwhelmed and carried away by this symphonic impetuosity, were seized with dizziness; they were in a position to grasp what Hitler was about to say, what he was aiming at, and what vast schemes were being hatched in his mind. No doubt events were hastening towards the most radical revolution that history had known. It is possible—nay it is even certain—that Hitler was dreaming of realizing his program of conquest with extreme ease by relying above everything else on the unpreparedness of others. He had planned that his procedure should be progressive and methodical; no indefinite elements were to come into his calculations. First of all he contemplated setting up a gigantic war-machine on such a scale that its mere existence would make his opponents submit resignedly to the will of Germany. There was only one obstacle in the way of attaining this goal—England.

Typical of the type of person who fell under the spell of Hitler's oratory was a Flemish man who during those years acted as a translator for an important German firm—an ec-

centric sort of fellow who still kept up the manner and even the very garb of his university days at Heidelberg. During the first world war he had escaped from Belgium to enlist in the Wehrmacht and fight against France. He never returned to Belgium because he had been condemned to death in *absentia*.

This man, who was quite a character, appealed to me because, though he was a heavy drinker, he was not lacking in intelligence and seemed very sincere. Many a long evening he entertained me with forecasts of the coming era as he visualized it, basing his contentions on Hitler's theories. He had so thoroughly studied Hitler's doctrine that he had its original sources at his finger tips and could tell you right away where Hitler got this or that idea. In his opinion the climax would come when Germany would be in control of the whole world. Much of his work was done in close contact with people of prominence in the Nazi world, everyone of whom he knew, and furthermore, considered as a source of copy, he proved to be of great value to me. I listened to him with interest. The hub of the colossal and complicated revolution, which he foreshadowed for me evolved from the two collateral movements—Nazism and Fascism. The whole revolution would have these two "isms" as its pivot.

First of all, the Danubian and the Balkan regions would be absorbed by Germany, while Fascist Italy would have freed the Mediterranean from British domination. The next move would be a Nazi expedition against the East in deference to the old slogan, "The Drive to the East." The liquidation of at least a part of this East would be a relatively simple matter. The next phase in this career of conquest would be the surrender of France to the will of Berlin and Rome. The "unwarlike French Government" would be unable to do anything to prevent it; in fact, owing to its

blundering, it would facilitate the process of liquidation. When France was rendered powerless, Great Britain would find herself isolated, and her naval power, the only real obstacle to German hegemony, would be paralyzed by a carefully planned submarine attack. There would no longer be any small nations except the handful whose continued existence would be of advantage to the two great victorious powers, Germany and Italy. It is remarkable that every contention of this Flemish dreamer was backed by documents. He showed me the extracts—the very cuttings from Hitlerian propaganda—from which I could draw up a series of geographical tracts of territories that were to be liquidated.

His vision of the New Order did not end even with the Urals, but he saw the Hitlerian expansion spreading to farther Siberian tracts in Eastern Asia, even to Vladivostock. He saw, furthermore, India invaded by the Wehrmacht with Gandhi as an accomplice, and he saw the whole Moslem world paying obeisance to the New World Order. I later found the expression, "The New Order," repeated in the official pronouncements made by the German dictator. This dream of the New Order came very near to being translated into fact with the German victories in the autumn of 1939 and in the spring and summer of 1940.

In those early days I knew men in Germany who were all more or less of the pedantic doctrinaire type, who had learned their chief's gospel, and became its evangelists. Rudolph Hess was a typical specimen—in fact he belonged to the group of pioneers of Hitler's evangel. As a Latin I find it extraordinarily difficult to follow the philosophical maze of certain Nazi trends of reasoning. From what I gleaned from them in conversation I could draw only one inference. Germany was determined—had always been determined—to have a terrible revenge on her conquerors. The policy of Hitler and of Nazism is only a more modern, more

sincere and more brutal expression of a mentality of revenge. Germany is not the type of nation to become resigned. Germany alone is capable of conceiving the idea of a complete, dramatic and bloody overthrow of the entire world, if such a sacrifice would serve her own special ends.

The merest germ of this conception began to develop in the earliest years of the Republic of Weimar, when everybody believed that Germany, humiliated and exhausted by the first war and its bitter consequences, would decide to come to her senses. The conception arose from the conviction inherent in Germans that no other people can perform such miracles as the German people, and that the whole world lacks the qualities and the powers needed to offer, even under the most favorable circumstances, a strong resistance to the onward march of the Teuton. Hitler knew how to exploit this Teutonic element by transforming it into a religion, and of this religion he made himself the prophet and the head. None of the parallels from history that have been employed to describe Hitler seems to me so apt as one that suddenly came into my mind while I was listening to one of his usual philosophical tirades. Hitler patterned himself on Mahomet, who spread the evangel of the Koran by marching at the head of his armies with sword in hand against the infidels. Hitler's Koran was the New Order. Mussolini could not understand these two words, because he did not realize that Hitler's New Order was a thing to which Fascism would never have been able to give its co-operation on terms of absolute equality. It was nothing more than an exclusively German dream of conquest and aggrandizement.

It was enough to hear Hitler speaking when he did not have the mob in front of him, and was just conversing with a few people. Then, abandoning the air and attitude of a demagogue with which he was wont to present himself to

the public, he was just an ordinary man, and avoided rhetorical outbursts. Yet never was there a glimmer of any balanced estimate of events and situations, never a sincere admission and recognition of the inevitable. He never made a statement that was not full of acrimony, envy and hatred —profound hatred of his opponents. In fact, he never uttered a word of humility either with regard to himself, his country or his race. All his pronouncements exuded the spirit of strife, rivalry, the marshalling of armed forces and grandiose and fantastic plans for the future. On such occasions, too, his speech was aggressive and boastful, and there welled up in him from hidden depths in his soul an ever-increasing note of enthusiasm. But his voice had none of the reverberating roar of his public address. It seemed as though he was arguing with himself about his plans for the future. His eyes flashed fire, indicating that he meant in his heart every word he spoke. His whole frame shook with tremors which were at times convulsive, and saliva streamed from the corners of his lips. This mental excitement became more obvious, however, when he spoke about Great Britain than when France was the subject of argument, as though he was conscious that he was confronting a more serious obstacle. Men of the type of Hitler and Mussolini, when faced with difficulties, arduous problems and dangers, instead of pondering over the situation confronting them, and controlling their emotions, become more and more excited and inflamed. It was quite obvious that Hitler saw that Great Britain was his most dangerous rival. In his subconscious mind at least he did not fail to have a premonition of that greater obstacle that his scheme, which he had planned out such a long time in advance, would have to encounter. Like all the German people, Hitler could never understand why Great Britain should oppose the plans for German conquest.

Now to touch upon my impressions of those days. Hitler's program had been fully drawn up in all its details at the very beginning of his assumption of the role of ruler of the nation. Since to fulfill his complete program of conquest right away would have been impossible, Hitler deliberately planned in advance to put off the Western Powers with fair promises, by assuring them that the status quo would be respected, at least in Western Europe. He saw no reason for Great Britain and France to be alarmed if Germany, who had emerged from the World War I impoverished, and who was lacking supplies of many raw materials, should have shown a desire to expand eastwards. This need of German expansion towards the East was dealt with exhaustively in a voluminous mass of political writings which appeared in Germany immediately after the war.

Since the most burning and painful amputations had been made on Germany precisely in the East, why should not Germany's right to seek reparations in that particular zone be recognized? Immediately after the Treaty of Versailles German propaganda hastened to express pity for the outraged peoples of the German race who had been placed under a foreign yoke in Upper Silesia, in Danzig, in the Sudeten area, in Memel, and in that vast tract of East Prussia which had been cut off from the Fatherland through the medium of the Corridor, now given to Poland. It is certain that these complaints and lamentations, supplemented by statements that the Allies had not only been unjust, but too hasty and lacking in circumspection in their splitting up and allotting of territories, with detriment above all to ethnical values and rights, succeeded in touching certain sentimental hearts. Such amputations, it was asserted, aimed not merely at punishing Germany for having caused the war, but they had caused despair among the innocent

inhabitants of those provinces. I cannot recall how many times I and other foreign correspondents were invited to visit the Polish frontier, but I remember very clearly how dramatically all these blunders and errors were pointed out to us. These were the foundations on which Hitler built up Germany's political renaissance. It is remarkable how, on the eve of making one of his surprise swoops, he invariably repeated once more to France his eternal promise to leave her in peace, and his intention of making no changes in the West. It was a gauche way of lulling France's suspicions which ought to have alarmed her and inspired those who could do so to thwart the particular coup he was planning at the time.

But if some proposal were made by the Western Powers, if even half of what he asked were suggested in a conciliatory tone in order to calm the frenzy in Berlin, Hitler made a practice of beginning to haggle. He would point out that the proposed settlement ought to have originated from him, and that it would have to be thought out and elaborated upon. Whether from suspicion that he might be double-crossed, or whether it was that he preferred to have the initiative in his own hands, Hitler never yielded to any proposal coming from the Chancelleries of Paris or London. He paid no attention of any sort to the small nations, and did not care whether they agreed with him or not, or whether any one of them, when marked down by him, should protest or appeal. He made light of anything that was said at Geneva, because, according to his way of looking at it, the League of Nations could not be considered as a vital and efficient organization.

Undoubtedly by 1934—that is to say, barely a year after his accession to power—the Chief of Nazism had made up his mind to let Europe and the world realize that Germany, having raised its head in a very positive way, would be able,

step by step, but, for all that, with comparative speed, to assert her absolute supremacy over Europe. First came the secret sensational arming of the German nation; second, the liberation of all the regions declared by Germany, whether on the grounds of a historical valuation, or on the grounds of traditions and ethnical arguments that were adduced, as rightly forming part of German territory. All the ideals cherished at Geneva were brutally scattered to the winds—the building up of a system of collective security, the observance of pledges that had been given, and the principle of disarmament. Nazi Germany never intended to observe even one of these international agreements. Pre-Nazi Germany, less categorical in her contempt for such pledges, made a pretence of observing them only in so far as they might serve her as a guarantee—and above all, in order to gain time.

Italy and Fascism were never highly regarded in the German camp. I began to notice this in the early days of my long residence in Germany, and that was before the advent of Hitler. If Germans were Social Democrats from an apparently ideological and doctrinaire motive they had to repudiate Fascism, and denounce the changes brought about in Italy by Mussolini. They appeared to harbor bad feeling against Mussolini, who had been a strict Socialist, for having abjured that ideology. Mussolini's attacks against class warfare and Marxism antagonized every Socialist and democratic conscience, beginning with those of Germany, where these ideologies originated under the ægis of Karl Marx. But the antipathy was of a passive kind and took the guise of indifference. The Social-Democratic press, which was the official Press of the Republic of Weimar, with its chief organ *Vorwaerts*, derided the changes which were gradually wrought by Fascism, and described the corpora-

tive state as the work of a dilettante. The Communists, as may well be imagined, did not let the opportunity pass of hurling abuse at Rome. But the strangest thing was that the German Right were still more spiteful against Mussolini. This was not on account of Fascism, to which the Right gave little thought, but on account of territory known as the Alto Adige. The Right remembered that Italy had annexed the provinces considered by the Germans as their own territory. That France should have annexed Alsace-Lorraine did not seem to them as unjust and absurd as this rape of the Alps, entailing an outrage on an ethnically German population. To try to explain why Italy went over to the side of the Allies and expound Italy's right to her natural frontiers was mere waste of energy in those circles in which I mixed in Berlin. Being well aware that Italy in reality was not a great political force and was relegated to a post of secondary importance in the list of the victorious nations, and being fully informed about the distrust and uneasiness that prevailed between Paris and Rome, and consequently between Fascism and the French Popular Front, the men of the Right in Germany surmised that by keeping their fingers pointed towards the Alto Adige, they were taking aim at a very weak and delicate spot. In picking out the points of minor resistance and in taking advantage of them Germany has always been supreme.

In reality there was no doubt about the feelings of the conservative and traditionalist elements in the Reich; to them Italy was just a renegade who had gained unfair profits. The military section which was allied to the Conservative party shared their anti-Italian rancor. And the military section now comprised an army of 100,000 men, which Versailles agreed to let Germany have, an army of the very highest quality, formed by Seeckt with a very clear insight into the future. And in addition to this picked embryo of

what was to be the future Wehrmacht, there was the unlimited band of discharged soldiers, the organization of the Steel Helmets, headed by Seldte, a haughty profession of what Prussian militarism had always been and always will be. The soldiers all distrusted Italy, but neither was Italy, notwithstanding its Fascist baptism, greeted with any affection by budding Nazism. A rivalry had arisen between Hitler and Mussolini on the issue of priority. It was just a simple matter of dates. Hitler took the credit of having in the fortress of Landsberg, first developed the idea of a grand national movement on anti-democratic and authoritarian lines. But Mussolini had established his system in March of 1919.

This similarity which had suddenly been discovered between Fascism and National Socialism could not possibly form a link between the two movements. A streak of jealousy and envy was obvious in Hitler's attitude, despite the fact that when speaking on the subject he always avoided making any display of his real feelings. How easily Mussolini had been able to attain his goal, Hitler reflected with bitterness, and how heart-felt was his ambition to do likewise! If only old Hindenburg had not been so stubborn as to see in National Socialism a dangerous extremist tendency, if the aged Field Marshall had not permitted himself to be so utterly fooled by his generals and his friends among landed gentry, such as Oldenburg-Januschau, and had shown the same realistic spirit and the same liberalism as Victor Emmanuel.

In the year 1932, which was the year before his appointment as Chancellor, the Fuehrer was summoned to Hindenburg, who wanted to know what really was the aim of his intensive revolutionary activity, and whether he would be satisfied with a ministerial seat in the Government just then in power. Hitler replied, "What I wish is that your Excel-

lency should grant me the same authority as Mussolini holds in Italy." Hindenbug had no alternative but to show the door to the exasperated leader of the Nazis.

Nevertheless, it is incredible that the precedent afforded by Fascism in Italy when it gained power and freed itself from all the other parties was not of advantage to Hitler. Certainly he must have felt encouraged by it as far as he himself was concerned, for the basic idea of the two movements, of the two revolutionaries, was the same. It is quite true that Mussolini did not like to hear people talking about Hitler's revolution, because in his opinion revolution meant fighting and daring, not merely electoral conflicts. But for Hitler it was quite a different matter. Whether in public or at the meetings of the directorate of his party, he passed over this theme in silence. Nazism won the battle in January, 1933, following a party game between Hindenbug, Hitler, Goering, and Von Papen. At that time Fascism had not only been entrenched in power for more than ten years, but had achieved a great many things, including the Charter of Labor, and it had concluded the Concordat with the Holy See. The precedent of Fascism had been throughout all this period of preparation, right up to the conquest of power, a kind of moral support for Nazism—an inspiring factor, as it were, and to use a judicial term, "a species of alibi," because in its similarity to Fascism Hitler's movement could always find protection against all the charges that he was aiming at producing chaos in Germany.

Notwithstanding this, the Nazi press published reckless statements about Mussolini and Italy. Before Goebbels had become Minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich he began to launch venomous attacks on Fascism. What a splendid thermometer of Nazi bad temper this man, who is truly unique in his demagogic tirades, has always been! One day in September, 1931, the *Angriff* published a ferocious

attack on my chief, Arnaldo Mussolini, who was accused of trying to take advantage of his position to enrich himself and who, it was predicted, was the man earmarked for the post when there would be a new "changing of the guard" in Italy. Now I, who worked under Arnaldo Mussolini, can alone express my deep regret that by his premature death at Christmas that same year, Fascism lost one of its very few upright and level-headed adherents.

Benito Mussolini may well recall that when his brother was alive, he received numerous letters from him written in an unobtrusive, but nevertheless reproachful vein, full of criticisms and admonitions and advice against letting the party degenerate into what it later became—a gang of satraps, profiteers, roisterers, and traitors to the collective interests and to the nation. Arnaldo Mussolini was the Duce's mentor for many years, and as long as his warnings and his predictions reached the leader of the Fascist State, things went tolerably well; but on his death, a state of anarchy developed. Arnaldo neither sought power nor a career, and he never aimed at attaining wealth.

That was the reason why, after a brief conversation by telephone with him in Milan, I called at the office of the *Angriff* with a spirited letter of repudiation, which had been dictated to me by my chief, and which he wished to be published immediately. Goebbels was the soul of the Nazi paper. Promises were given to me, which I communicated to Arnaldo, but the letter never appeared. This was typical Nazi journalistic ethics. I swore to myself that never again would I set foot in the office of the *Angriff*, and I have kept my oath. In view of future events, it is interesting to note the cold-bloodedness with which, in those days, in spite of ties of affinity, in spite of ideological associations and all the other silly claptrap that has been uttered on this score, an official organ of Nazism did not hesitate to insult in the

most disgraceful fashion one of the leading personalities of Fascism—to say nothing of his being a brother of the Duce.

The only Nazi who at that time seemed more tractable than the others—and more understanding also—was Hermann Goering. Goering's admiration for the Duce was based not only on the ability which Mussolini had shown as a statesman and a leader, but also on his human traits and on his physical vigor. It was a kind of solidarity between the fleshy and massive man and one who, at the age of fifty, had managed by persistently taking exercise every day, despite the limited time available for that purpose, to keep his body trim and even athletic. Finally, since Goering was by nature extremely practical—in this respect he was very unlike the other Nazis—he saw in Mussolini the triumph of a realistic spirit over rhetoric. In addition to this Mussolini had taken an air-pilot's certificate, and Goering had been an airman during the war and belonged to the famous Richthofen squadron. Their points of contact were, in consequence, sufficient to awake in the Nazi Goering a blend of feelings all more or less favorable to Italy and to Mussolini. But, as I have already pointed out, he was the only one of the Nazis who entertained such sentiments.

I had observed that the show windows of a bookseller's shop in the Motzstrasse in Berlin, which was owned by the well-known organization of the *Bund für Deutsches Volkstum im Ausland*, a notoriously bureaucratic and Nazi affair, for whole weeks on end displayed publications about an alleged Irredentist movement in the Alto Atestine area and about the sufferings of the Germans of the Alto Adige, as well as on Germany's claim to that province. Furthermore, prominence was given to carefully planned ethnical and geographic charts in which emphasis was laid on the wrong done by Italy to the German people by annexing this

frontier region. But they pushed anti-Italian propagandist publicity even further. Other maps extended Germany's claims as far as Istria and Friuli.

The Germans are unsurpassable in the propaganda sphere. The subject matter of these propagandist publications was above criticism, on account of its splendid presentation on paper. Anybody who had seen the book jackets and pamphlets, with heart-breaking pictures of Istrian and Atesine women, and the huge blood-colored notes of exclamation, and the bright red hand-written titles to attract more attention—titles that started with copper-plate lettering and trailed off into semi-illegibility suggestive of a wave of anguish overwhelming the soul of the writer, and had then taken pains to read the publicity stuff, might have easily persuaded himself that Italy had been guilty of the most inhuman oppression. And yet I know that somebody was pulling strings already on the Italian side to convince Mussolini what a magnificent thing it would be if the two movements should march side by side in aim and in action. Groups that were enthusiastically working for this purpose were being formed in Rome, Milan and all the other Italian cities.



## II. LIVING DANGEROUSLY

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES THE QUESTION HAS BEEN asked, "What sort of man was Mussolini?" Following him through the long years of his political activity, I recall his unstable mind and character, and the restlessness of his soul that was never satisfied. He was changeable and chameleon-like, and seemed to be in a continuous process of evolution. Besides, he was a perfect comedian, and those who did not come in contact with him either got a fictitious idea or remained permanently incredulous; in either case the idea of understanding Mussolini had to be given up. Yet, can it be possible that there is no means of discovering the fundamental and definite traits of Mussolini's character?

My first meeting with the Duce was more than twenty years ago, in the spring of 1920, when, at the behest of Gabriele d'Annunzio, I went to Milan to the Via Paolo di Cannobio, where the lair of the first Fascio was, to ask Mussolini to take steps to get help sent to the little garrison of legionaries who had barricaded themselves in Fiume. It was one of those typical gloomy December days in Milan. On the ground in the courtyard were piled up in the greatest disorder shells and boxes of ammunition, and around

the walls were propped the gilded spears of the legionaries. Mussolini was not alone in his offices, where there was a continuous coming and going of messengers, and where some people in black shirts seemed to be waiting for something or other. I saw the two dilated orbs of his popping eyes, and a snout jutting out from the background of massive jaws. It was Mussolini. He wore a greasy cloak with its collar turned up, and he was bareheaded. His voice was uneven, now deep and booming, now shrill and piercing. The last syllables of his words were inaudible and seemed to stick in his saliva-clogged uvula. I know that I returned to the Carnaro with my mind filled with rhetorical saws, and with the firm conviction that Mussolini was a man with a very great sense of his own importance.

Two years later, Piero Parini, who was the news editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, and later became director-general of the foreign Fasces (he was also the Italian Minister at Cairo for a very short spell until the Egyptian Government made the post untenable for him) brought me into contact with the Duce for the second time, in the office of his own paper. The interview only lasted for a few minutes. Parini telephoned in advance from the city to say that we were coming along. We had only a few hundred yards to go, and a few minutes later we were shown into the board room of the *Popolo d'Italia*. Mussolini and Piero did all the talking. I did not even open my mouth. Mussolini, who presumed that I was a sub-editor, curtly remarked, "This is the headquarters of the revolution, not a palace," and dismissed me with a wave of his hand. Benito Mussolini, the head of the *Popolo d'Italia*, was much the same as Benito Mussolini, the head of the Government. He was aloof, contemptuous of everybody around him and self-absorbed. The paper only existed for his inflammatory leading articles. The rest of

its contents did not matter to him. He used to shut himself up for days on end in his study, refusing to answer the telephone and seeing as few people as possible. When he passed through the corridor towards the exit, he would shoot peculiar curt inquisitive glances at all who crossed his path. I often asked myself whether all his gestures and all his actions were merely histrionic poses. Certainly no public man was ever so aloof, affected and theatrical as he was, even when he seemed most sincere.

The only one who seemed to know him intimately was "the Slinger," Sandro Giuliani, the editor-in-chief, who had been with Mussolini on the Socialist paper *Avanti*, and had followed him like a puppy in his political metamorphoses. But Sandro Giuliani always entered his chief's room trembling with terror, and never told us anything of what transpired.

I lived in this atmosphere for several years, even after Mussolini went to Government headquarters. Now and again he returned to "the lair" to show that he wished to remain faithful to his "beginnings." Then one day Matteotti, one of the most challenging of the spokesmen for the parliamentary opposition, a Reformist Socialist, was assassinated. The editorial offices of the *Popolo d'Italia*, which, after the assumption of leadership of the State by Mussolini, had become the mecca of a ceaseless nocturnal pilgrimage of senators, deputies and outstanding men from all camps in quest of a moral certificate of Fascist orthodoxy, were completely boycotted. Nobody called there any more during the small hours of the morning. The pages of the newspaper went as usual, one by one, to the foundry, and all the technical details of the production of the paper were carried out meticulously, but there were no longer any callers lounging about in the editorial rooms among tables strewn with papers and writing materials. They all kept far

away from the *Popolo d'Italia*, and threw away their Fascist badges. Fascism was now in the dock.

I must say that for us who were sweating in the production department of the newspaper, journalists personally aloof from professional politics, none of whom had ever been asked to take the Fascist pledge, those were bitter days. But the mud that was flung at the nation reacted on us as well as on the people. Had not Roberto Farinacci, who was chief secretary of the Party, assumed the role of the ruthless coercionist, making dire threats against traitors and wobblers, Fascism would have been utterly liquidated that summer. Later on, Farinacci had to put up a defense for Dumini, the man who was chiefly implicated in the murder of Matteotti. But the moral crisis in the Fascist camp lasted for a long period before time obliterated its effects.

Mussolini declared that he hated morning coats and silk hats, which he regarded as indicative of a commonplace and foolish mentality. Consequently it may be imagined what commotion it caused in social circles to see the Duce appearing one day in this formal apparel. His squat muscular frame looked as if it were about to burst the seams of the morning coat, which had been cut by a Roman tailor who had been the Duce's comrade in the trenches. Mussolini had forgotten his ancient prejudices. Afterwards he went to Milan to deliver a lecture to a select audience in the Cafe Cova, in the Piazza della Scala. In the first row among those who made room for him on his entrance into the hall, was Giulio Barella, a reporter on a Milan paper. It was observed that Mussolini paused for a few moments in front of him, his eyes on the ground. He was struck by the spotless whiteness of the spats Barella was wearing. Every day after that, and at every opportunity, Mussolini went about wearing white cloth spats over black shoes, which

made him look like a penguin, and Barella was appointed legal adviser of the daily paper *Secolo*, and later on managing director of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

The "changing of the guard" was an institution created by Mussolini. It was in keeping with his own mind, in keeping with his nature which was never satisfied and with his custom of regarding his collaborators as creatures of no account. He took care to respect this precaution with great frequency. Ministers and party secretaries were quite accustomed to find on their desks, without any preliminary notice, forms of resignation ready waiting for their signature. Sometimes he himself sent these notices of dismissal for publication to the *Agenzia Stefani*, and the victims learned their fate from the newspapers. Mussolini never had friends, but merely serfs, none of whom ever told him the truth. How often in the hall of the *Palazzo Venezia* have I met leading officials of the regime who had come to make their report, and before being ushered into his presence asked the majordomo of the house about the chief's temper that day!

Mussolini entrusted me with the task of sending him reports from Berlin on the developments in Germany. These reports were to be sent to him personally and only through the medium of the *Popolo d'Italia*. No other office was to be used for the purpose of transmitting these reports. In the earlier days we had as Ambassador in the German capital Aldrovandia Marescotti, who was interested only in Dante and Goethe, in bridge and in tennis. He was a diplomatic gentleman of the old school, which is tantamount to saying that he knew nothing at all about diplomacy. He was succeeded by Orsini Baroni, a corpulent elderly and sickly man who, except when prevented by official dinners and receptions, retired to bed at eight o'clock every evening. Orsini was a shrewd Florentine, experienced

in his ambassadorial duties and punctiliously observant of routine. His wife, a German woman, had, on one side of her family, very close connections with high finance. The tenure of office of both these Ambassadors was quite uneventful. The next Ambassador was Vittorio Cerruti, with his Hungarian wife, who was said to be of Jewish extraction.

I used to get on very well with Cerruti. He knew how we were situated. He was only too well aware that there was no real chance of genuinely cordial relations with Berlin. Hitler had risen to power, and his program of reforms was known to be radical. The burning of the Reichstag and the trial which followed it had raised the pressure of the German political barometer to its highest level. Finally a systematic persecution of the Jews was started with the utmost ferocity. In the field of foreign politics the atmosphere was becoming more and more electric, owing to the steadily increasing menace in the tone of Hitler's speeches in his references to a future revision of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, and to the unmistakable tendency to make Germany the center of a new European explosion.

Cerruti was not the man to allow dust to be thrown in his eyes; he, as well as I, saw that grave danger for our continent was hidden behind Hitler. Every evening he shut himself up in his room, working as hard as he could with his little typewriter which he had brought from Rome. He saw a great many people. He held counsel with his colleagues of the diplomatic corps, in conjunction with whom he established a sort of information bureau. They all suspected that Hitler's Germany was actually manufacturing arms in secret. The general impression among them was that sooner or later Hitler would denounce the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Elisabetta Cerruti was of great help to her husband in picking up information in the social circle of the German capital.

I am not sure whether it was Dieckhoff or Weizsaecker, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who, during a discussion on the Austrian question, interrupted Cerruti, who was supporting with powerful arguments Italy's case for a political balance in the Danubian sphere, by exclaiming in a reproachful tone, "But your Excellency seems always to take too much to heart the interests of your own country." The Ambassador shook his head as he related this incident to me. It showed the atmosphere in which one had to work. Poor Cerruti, he alone was in a position to know about the struggle that was going on in Government circles in Germany. Frequently the Marchese Francesco Antinori, who belonged to the paper, and I, who used to meet people well informed about the temper of the Wilhelmstrasse, warned him to be on his guard. We felt anxious for his wife's sake as well as his own, for it was said that he spoke against Germany and Nazism, and was frequently in the company of people representing Germany's literary and artistic world, which at that period included in its ranks a great many Jews. Certainly it was not with any enthusiasm that Cerruti undertook the role allotted to him of arranging for the first meeting between the two chiefs, Mussolini and Hitler.

In Nazi political circles at that time it was held that personal contact between heads of the State was the best medium for dispelling the atmosphere of diffidence and prejudice that prevailed. And so it was that the Germans went to Venice. So far as Mussolini was concerned it was just a case of mere curiosity to make the acquaintance of the man about whom all Europe was talking. He had already formed his own opinion about Hitler, and I think that the interview strengthened that opinion. In the course of a chat with me at the Palazzo Venezia Mussolini had said to me, "Hitler is simply a muddle-headed fool. His head is stuffed with philosophical and political tags that are utterly inco-

herent. I can't make out why he waited so long to take over power, and why he played the buffoon, with his ridiculous electoral contests, in order to take legal possession of the reins of power. Either he is a revolutionary or he is not. Fascist Italy would never have come into being without a march on Rome. We are dynamic, and Signor Hitler is just a prater." Such was Mussolini's attitude at the end of 1933.

The meeting at Venice was a little family comedy. The entire Italian press turned up, directors and all, to see that strange freak, Hitler. The Fuehrer arrived accompanied by von Neurath, Goebbels, Dietrich and minor Party officials. There had been a very informal protocol for the agreements made between the two parties. The peak was to be the conversation between the two chiefs which took place on the Lido golf links in the bright morning sunshine, while they strolled to and fro over the grass. I noticed that Hitler was speaking all the time in a very excited way, while Mussolini listened, silent and with a scowl on his face.

During the course of the two hours the Duce rarely opened his mouth to reply to Hitler's spate of verbiage. He was so bored by Hitler's drivel that that very evening, in the middle of the official reception, he decamped in a hurry, and left the lagoon, stating that he did not want to see anybody. Hitler, meanwhile, was left to the voracity of the journalists who had stormed the Hotel Danieli to hear his oracular pronouncements. I still recall how Gayda fussed and fumed in order to be introduced to the Fuehrer. Manlio Morgagni, president of the Stefani Agency, demanded that I should speak to Cerruti and impress on him that the official agency of Italy had the right to be invited to the banquet to be given on the following day in honor of their guest. Dietrich improvised a mixed meeting of Italian and German journalists at which the usual conventional phrases were uttered. Gayda seized the

opportunity, in his broken German, to air his irrepressible yearning to strut and show off on such an important occasion. Later on there was a procession on the Piazzo San Marco, where the brilliant idea struck the Federal Secretary of Venice to parade the same Fascist formations three consecutive times. These formations wheeling round in the maze of the narrow streets reformed their procession after rearranging its component members in a different order. While this comical parade was in progress, Dietrich came in for a spate of abuse from a commissary of public security who did not recognize in him one of the most eminent of the nation's guests, no less a personage than the head of the Nazi press of the Reich.

Both Mussolini and Hitler thought that they were destined to dominate Europe, but each of them had his own secret plan for attaining that result. Gayda alone hit upon the idea of a definite dual dominion of the two chiefs in collaboration with each other. I am sure that if the two men had never come to an agreement the world would never have been thrown into the maelstrom of a new terrible war, for Hitler would never have been courageous enough to start his career of rapine alone. On the other hand, I insist on affirming that Hitler and Mussolini, although they formed with one another that abominable pact known as the Axis, were not made by nature to understand one another. In Mussolini the dominant impulse was whim, in Hitler it was dogma. They did not come to an agreement at Venice, and they never would have come to an agreement had not circumstances intervened to make possible a life-and-death pact.

Cerruti had foreseen clearly that it would turn out a fiasco. In fact, shortly afterwards the storm broke. For political reasons Mussolini had undertaken to defend Austria. He had established an intimate personal friendship with Doll-

fuss, who often went to Rome in quest of support against the persistent overbearing gestures of Nazi Germany. Prince Stahremberg had reinforced his Home Guard with Fascist supporters. By this attitude Mussolini kept a check on Hitler's political activities on the frontiers of the little Danubian nation. If Nazism aimed at hegemony in that sector, it had to bear in mind that Italy had forestalled it. The Duce blew the trumpets of the Fascist press, which was noted for its fiery temper, and we had a fierce campaign the mere memory of which today should make the framers of the Axis grow pale. The Roman newspapers stated that the Nazis were bloodthirsty barbarians, that they were homosexual and that there was something definitely lacking in them. After the Roehm episode the Fascist press branded the German people as a race of degenerates.

My paper required me to collect as much material as possible in order to discredit Germany and Nazism. A series of articles written from the Saar during the plebiscite had stirred up a feeling of sullen enmity towards me on the part of some Nazi newspaper directors, chief among them being Braun von Stumm, not to mention fierce attacks by the *Boersen Zeitung*, the inspired organ of the Wilhelmstrasse. Megerle, the editor, and Braun von Stumm had sworn to get back at me; the latter, I was told, always carried with him in his attaché case, the cutting from the *Popolo d'Italia* with my article to which such exception had been taken, in order to have always with him proof that I was a journalist with an anti-German bias. My friends later informed me that in the precincts of the famous Ribbentrop office my name had appeared on the black list. I never could find out precisely what the purpose of this office was, whether it was to prepare for the candidacy of Ribbentrop as Minister of Foreign Affairs to supersede von Neurath, who was deemed to be too moderate, or whether

it was intended to be a school, if one might use the term, of policy in the domain of foreign politics, as the Gestapo was in the domain of internal policy. It is certain that fine specimens of journalists, intriguing diplomats and rogues of all kinds came from that Office. The relationship between Ribbentrop and Himmler was so intimate that it is not surprising that they should have had such an identity of methods.

Mussolini showed no inclination to end the anti-German and anti-Nazi campaign which he had started. At bottom, if we eliminate useless and dangerous excesses, this campaign had been started in order to appeal to all sound thinkers. The finger was placed on an old sore, and a great many anomalies were revealed. In those days Fascism proclaimed itself the paladin of the weak and the downtrodden as well as of the peace of Europe. I was summoned to Rome, where the Duce heard my verbal report substantiating the gist of my writings which I regularly sent to him. Having realized that in various Berlin circles there was a demand for action by Germany against Austria, Mussolini, giving way to an outburst of rage exclaimed, "Let him come! Hitler has no idea what great things Fascist Italy is capable of doing. I can teach him how war is waged. I do not fear Germany with all her open and secret preparations." I recall how he suddenly jumped up from his seat behind the large table, and measured the length of the room in long strides until, having came right up to the wall, he wheeled round abruptly, his face scarlet with fury, and fixed his eyes on me. "Tell these gentlemen," he went on, "that they cannot trifle with Italy of the Littoria!"

I had hardly reached Berlin when the dreadful atrocity in Vienna was perpetrated. Dollfuss was assassinated, and his wife and infant children fled to Italy for refuge, where the Mussolini family lavished hospitality and assistance on the

widow and orphans. The Duce then made a grand gesture. He announced that he had sent five divisions to the Brenner Pass to safeguard Italian interests should Hitler persist in his design of annexing Austria. This threat about the five divisions was just a little farce. What actually happened was that the local garrisons in the frontier provinces received orders to be mobilized at all times. Furthermore, five divisions would not have been enough to restrain Hitler, whose forces in Germany, if one accepted German admissions, had assumed proportions far in excess of what the Duce calculated. But it was evident that the threat cowed Hitler. The Austrian National Socialists were requested to moderate their frenzy, and the word "Anschluss" was erased from the German political terminology.

But the Nazi press did not forgive Mussolini for his intervention, and thenceforward adopted a very severe and critical attitude towards him. Meanwhile events were following each other with startling rapidity. Under the terrified eyes of the democratic powers Hitler had one by one rendered null a number of clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and had assumed complete liberty on the question of armaments. One morning the Verein der Auslaendischen Presse, the Foreign Press Union in Berlin, of which my friend Louis P. Lochner was the president, entertained Goering and his wife as guests for breakfast at the Adlon Hotel, and I sat beside Emma Goering. It was on that occasion that Air Marshal Goering told us in a sarcastic tone that all our suspicions about a secret revival of the German Air Arm had been perfectly well-founded, notwithstanding categorical official denials. With a triumphal air, he added that the aerial armaments had been all completed in secret, and that the planes had been built in sections in different places; all that remained to be done was to assemble them. Nevertheless, the Government was right in asserting that

the planes to which the foreign press referred, did not exist. They did not exist in the sense that they had not yet passed out of the marshalling yards. Goering always liked these dramatic interludes, and this was a day of genuine triumph for him. My colleagues rushed to the telephone booths to communicate the sensational news to their papers. I kept my seat beside Frau Goering and was just asking her to give me some details about her husband's projected trip to Greece, when he himself interrupted with some heat. "Yes, but this time the plane in which I am traveling will not break its journey in Italy. It had been my plan at first to pass through Rome, but I have abandoned the idea. After what happened between us it will be a long time before you see me in your country."

In the summer of 1935 a change took place in the Italian embassy at Berlin. Vittorio Cerruti, whom the Germans had accused of representing Italy's interests with too much truth and fidelity, was recalled and placed on the retired list. He was succeeded by Bernardo Attolico, whose last diplomatic mission had been at Rio de Janeiro, immediately after a period in Moscow. This was the first change made through the desire of Galeazzo Ciano. The appointment of Ciano to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which followed soon after gave me the impression of an act of nepotism for the Duce had entrusted this post to no one and had kept it for himself for many years. After the marriage of Galeazzo and Edda, the Duce's daughter, the position of the Cianos, a Leghorn family, had become a powerful one. Until then the Duce had been particularly careful not to show any favoritism to any of his relatives, and with the exception of his brother Arnaldo, all the Duce's numerous cousins and relatives had remained petty officials of the lowest rank. But the Cianos were not people to let slip the opportunity of attaining wealth and influence.

Galeazzo's career abroad had been limited to the post of consul-general of first rank at Shanghai. Later he became head of the official Government Press, and finally he established the Ministry of Popular Culture. In 1933 he and his wife spent some weeks in London. Apparently they returned from the British capital dissatisfied, maintaining that they had not been received by English Society with the regard due to the daughter and the son-in-law of Mussolini. I noticed that there was a change in the atmosphere, because my reports were no longer in demand, and when I returned to Rome, I found some difficulty in being received by the Duce. It would have been no better had I spoken to Ciano, a thing which I took very good care not to do as the report had reached my ears during these few days in Rome that Ciano was in favor of establishing better relations with Berlin.

Before coming to the German capital Attolico must have been informed about my opinions with regard to Germany, and about the reports which I generally sent, for he suddenly began to keep me under observation. People had told him that I had at my disposal a certain number of valuable sources of information, and this made him jealous. But he never made the slightest move to invite my co-operation; on the contrary, he assumed a hostile attitude. Not trusting anybody in the embassy, with the exception of Magistrati, the Chief Secretary, who was himself Ciano's brother-in-law, he had appointed as his own special reporter an official of the German Ministry. Braun von Stumm, my implacable enemy, told him on what good terms he was with the Wilhelmstrasse. I could never understand this ingenuousness on the part of Attolico, who was really an old fox at the game. But his great handicap was that he knew nobody and did not know the language.

He instituted Mondays as "Press Days," when he got all us correspondents to go to the embassy for a conference, which invariably began with the question, meant specially for me, as to whether we had any news to tell him. I adopted the tactics of silence and indifference in dealing with Attolico. He used to glance at me obliquely through his glasses—he was rather near-sighted—and that glance told me everything. When the president of my Agency, the Stefani, passed through Berlin, Attolico took him to his house to extract a promise that he would order me to send him my reports before telephoning them. Foreseeing this, however, I put Morgagni on his guard, and urged him not to be weak, and to remember that an agency ought to be able to turn out independent and very speedy work. I did not even go to Rome any more, because they told me that every time I went away it made the Ambassador nervous. By this time everybody knew about this moody antipathy between us, which was constantly being aggravated by Braun von Stumm.

Attolico was not the only diplomat who deliberately sent false reports to the Italian Government, but he did this job in a special way, ordering the publicity department of the embassy to cut out special extracts from the German papers which suited his purpose best, and sending these cuttings to Rome to produce the effect he wanted. The Abyssinian campaign started in October, 1935. We all read the articles in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* and the other Nazi organs urging the Negus to resist the Italian attack, while at the same time Mussolini in a speech had specially emphasized the fact that Germany had refused to join in the sanctions against him. The inconsistency was obvious. Rome should have been informed about the position, but instead of that, the Ambassador studied every means of getting his Government to rely upon him to bring about unqualified

sympathy on the part of Germany towards the Ethiopian enterprise.

Before the Italian campaign Germany had adopted a policy of economic penetration in Abyssinia which Mussolini's adventure unexpectedly upset. The German minister at Addis Ababa was on a very friendly footing with the Negus who saw him frequently, much more frequently than he saw the minister for Great Britain. German delegations were on the eve of departure for Abyssinia to examine the question of advantageous developments. Apart from all that, Berlin could not forget the attitude adopted by Mussolini on the Austrian question, and the intensive campaign carried on in the Italian press against Nazism, all of which showed what a deep gulf yawned between the mentalities of the two peoples. But Attolico had over-estimated the significance of the German gesture in refusing to take part in the sanctions imposed by Geneva on Italy for her attack on Ethiopia. Germany refused to have anything to do with the sanctionist combine not from any solidarity with Italy, but merely because it suited her own ends. If England were eliminated as a competitor, Germany would remain the only nation to supply coal for Italian industries. In place of the Welsh coal, the importation of which had been immediately stopped when the deliberations on the question of sanctions started, Mussolini thought he was making a good deal in buying inferior and more expensive German coal.

In this connection, a rather interesting interlude is worth describing. A friend of mine who was at the head of a huge concern dealing with the distribution of fuel in Northern Italy—he had formerly been a customer of the organizations that produced coal for Rome—wrote to me in Berlin, in January, 1936, requesting my intervention with the German authorities on the exportation of this mineral. There existed at the time an Italo-German pact for the supply of such ex-

ports; but the amount stipulated for a whole year had been used up in just two months by Italian industry, working at feverish tempo to turn out armaments for the Abyssinian war. My friend asked me to have the agreement relaxed, in view of the urgency and seriousness of the position, urging that more coal should be sent to Genoa, the center of export for the war zone. He included in the letter photographed copies of the desperate appeals that reached him, as the distributor, from a number of big Lombard, Ligurian and Piedmontese industrial establishments, stating that they found it impossible to continue their task of producing armaments for the army in Abyssinia. A patriotic duty was in question; consequently I did not hesitate to do what I was asked, although deep in my soul, from the very start, I had misgivings about the benefits likely to accrue from this colonial war, which, even under the most favorable circumstances, would, in return for a trivial gain, place Italy's international position and her friendship with the Great Powers in jeopardy. I went first to the offices of the headquarters of the Rheinische-Westfaelische Sindikat, thence to the Ministry of Economics, in order to negotiate with a mining official who appeared to be connected with the practical side of the exportation of mineral products. I got a most prompt and even enthusiastic assent to my request immediately. The magnates of the Rhineland and Westphalia had quantities of coal already mined and dumped on the lines between Essen and Dusseldorf and Gelsenkirchen, which I myself had observed as I sped along by motor through those regions, to say nothing of the Saar region which was even richer in coal and had been restored to its German owners a few years previously. As for the mining official, he promised to give me a definite reply as soon as he had consulted with the other officials in the Ministry. Barely two hours later he rang me up at my house

to tell me that my request had been granted. New supplies of coal, in addition to what had already been contracted for, would be dispatched to Italy, for she was engaged in an adventure on which her prestige as a great nation depended. Yet nothing further happened, because the Italian embassy intervened and the trade agent thought himself slighted by my private initiative. But what had happened showed that Germany was interested in making a cash deal, now that she had no longer had any competition to fear.

Nor was that all. Germany was also selling arms to the Negus of Abyssinia. An Arab was introduced to me, whom I knew just as "Ali," and who, I am inclined to believe, controlled a network of espionage propaganda among the Arabs in the Near East. He claimed to be a close friend of the Crown Prince of Yemen, and actually showed me the letters which the latter had sent him, as well as others in his own father's handwriting, stamped with huge seals. He gave me a synopsis of his family history, alleging that the Yemen, through the medium of the royal family which was on very friendly terms with Mussolini, was in the best political relations with Rome. The old sovereign—if I could believe the translation which "Ali" gave me of this Arabic missive, a language with which I was unfamiliar—was eternally deplored the difficulties which British agents scattered throughout Arabia were causing him. They were heart-to-heart friendly confidences, the outpourings of an embittered soul, but I suspected that behind these senile vapourings was hidden the trickery of a mercenary old Arab chief in financial straits, who had not succeeded in getting paid for his services either by England or by Italy. "Ali" was in correspondence with the German armament magnates and to a certain extent with all the traffickers in armaments in Europe, and gambled in this line of business.

On one occasion "Ali" called and informed me that he could dispose of a considerable assignment of rifles that were stored in Belgium, on which he had an option. He was anxious to offer them to the Italian Government, otherwise they would go to the Negus, who had asked for them. When I informed Rome of the possibility of making a deal, what was the reply I received? I was told that there was no use in buying the rifles. Let them be sent to Haile Selassie by all means, and in the meantime Italy would take steps to sink the cargo en route.

I had a lot of trouble and annoyance over this affair. Apparently taking me as the accredited representative of the Italian Government all these German travellers, speculators, business men and technicians who had something to say about Ethiopia kept dropping in at my house. I would never have fancied that there were in Germany so many people who were acquainted with this distant African region. My desk was piled up with proposals, requests, development plans and maps. One man came to tell me that he knew the Abyssinian territory because he had lived there for more than forty years and that nobody would be as capable as he was of pointing out to the Italians the exact localities that were suitable for systematic economic exploitation. Abyssinia suddenly became the paradise of gold, the opulent land where wealth was made. Finally a film magnate had grandiose schemes. He wished to make big adventure films with an African background. He meant to create a genuine Abyssinian film industry and to open motion picture theatres in that remote region. He brought a movie camera to my house, and showed me a guide to Addis Ababa which was rather interesting, since it showed, among other things, the home life of the Negus and his family.

What was the aim of these visitors? Who sent them to me? This I could never find out. I only know that seeing

that these various experiments proved abortive, the German Government took the plunge and, pointing out to Mussolini the intimate knowledge which a certain number of German experts had of Abyssinia, succeeded in obtaining from him an agreement for the formation of a commission, half-Italian, half-German, to be sent there to study the best means of developing this African California.

Another curious individual made desperate efforts to get in contact with me; when finally he succeeded, it was long before I could get rid of him. He said that he was an ex-colonel of the Reichswehr, declaring that he had fought under Essad Pasha, who had entrusted him with the task of re-organizing the Turkish military academies. He claimed a right to compensation from the Italian Government because, according to himself, he had worked at Addis Ababa in the service of the Italian espionage department, until having been betrayed by his own chauffeur, and miraculously escaping from an attempt made on his life by the order of Haile Selassie, he had to fly to Jibuti, leaving all his belongings behind. He asked me to visit him in his flat at Dahlem and to meet his young wife with their baby who, he said, was born in Addis Ababa. All the time I had the absolute conviction that this bore had been sent by the Gestapo to observe my movements. Sometimes he betrayed himself by recalling to my mind by vague casual allusions to certain well-known individuals in the Reich, all of whom I knew to belong to this circle. Another time he claimed to be working on a book dealing with the precedents of the Abyssinian affair and for this apparent purpose would ask me innumerable questions with the very remotest bearing on the theme of his alleged work. Furthermore, he was completely lacking in any literary or even journalistic skill. My suspicions were not unfounded. Once I got acquainted with this individual I learned that they were talking about

me more insistently in the offices of the Albrechtstrasse.

Mussolini's enterprise in Abyssinia was an instance of sheer bluff. Italy was at that time by no means as prepared as she should have been for a colonial war. Her arms were inadequate and out-of-date. Her transport vessels were too few to land in Africa an army fit for a long and perhaps exhausting colonial war. But even assuming that this army could have been safely landed, it would be faced with the insoluble problem of independence of action, seeing that it would have been impossible to ensure a steady flow of reinforcements in view of the necessity of their uninterrupted passage through the Suez Canal, which was controlled by the English.

The Mediterranean was not safe, and the Italian fleet was in no position to face the challenge of the British naval forces. When I asked our naval attaché in Berlin, just at the outset of the campaign, what our chances in the Mediterranean were, he replied, "My dear friend, let us not talk about it. If, for instance, we chanced to learn that the British fleet was on the way from Gibraltar to Alexandria or Haifa, we would have no alternative but to watch it pass with resignation. We could do nothing to stop it."

What a nice prospect, I thought, for this purely naval war, should Great Britain decide to intervene in aid of the Negus. Before we could become a military force on Ethiopian soil, ours was a task of defending ourselves on the sea, and if that defense failed, it was all up with our enterprise. Even then I thought that Mussolini would hardly be capable of exposing his country to such a risk without the adequate co-efficient of safety, for in the event of failure all the work of reconstruction in Africa of over ten years would be placed in jeopardy, and we should end in irreparable disaster. But Italy was not only lacking in national preparation; she lacked moral and political preparation as

well. The belated intervention of the Fascist press in support of the case for war in Abyssinia showed that Mussolini had decided upon war *ex abrupto* and at the last moment. On what grounds did he justify the aggression?

He maintained that Haile Selassie's freebooters had repeatedly made raids over their frontier into Italian Somaliland, in the course of which they perpetrated atrocities. Assuming that that was true, why did Mussolini make up his mind only at the last moment to call upon the world in protest against such outrages? The propagandist and documentary literature dealing with the provocative acts of the Negus, with pamphlets and leaflets and photographs of the victims of Ethiopian cruelty, was dispatched from Rome to the Italian embassies and legations abroad, neatly packed in boxes, only when the war was over.

Had Goebbels been handling such propaganda, he would have started a year in advance to fill the world with eloquent heart-wrenching indictments in his endeavor to convince it that Haile Selassie was the most savage of despots. But Mussolini has always been, on the stage of politics and war strategy, a performer who played and sang by ear without observing that the world's audience was not impressed by his inartistic performance. Mussolini had not even enough trained recruits or generals, nor had he impressed them with the necessity for the Abyssinian campaign. It was not an army that disembarked in the narrow and sultry port of Massawa, where it encountered 120 degrees of heat and all the tedium of normal routine, but a brigade of adventurers on a will-o'-the-wisp expedition, who hardly knew the purpose of their going, who arrived in an unfamiliar country exhausted, badly armed and depressed. Mussolini had said that the campaign would be finished in a few months, going against the opinion of the General Staff who were quite

candid about the risks of the enterprise under such conditions, with soldiers lacking the necessary experience, and unfitted for the African climate.

Wishing to give a cachet to the enterprise, Mussolini decided that all the leading Fascists in turn should do volunteer service with the fighting forces. Even this was rather a comic arrangement, for, with a few exceptions, the high priests of the Party and of the Government barely put in so much as a fleeting appearance in the drafts to Africa—just long enough to be able to say that they had been there. Yet they brought home medals for valor which for the most part were undeserved. In this way Galeazzo Ciano could pin on his breast a silver medal because he had once flown over a stretch of enemy territory with the squadron under his command.

But Mussolini's bluff carried him through. England made no move, nor did France. Nobody raised a finger to stop the enterprise. The Duce was able to finish with triumph a campaign which he had undertaken despite the scepticism of his generals, despite the sullen indifference of the nation, and despite the passive hostility of the Powers. He proclaimed the Empire, and finally gave orders that the list of the States that had supported the sanctions should be inscribed on the façades of all the municipal buildings in Italy, to serve alike as a memorial and a token of triumph. There were fifty states, all told, almost the whole world. Of course Germany alone stood aloof from the enactment of sanctions and preened herself for having done so.

At Berlin things had been going from bad to worse so far as I was concerned. My feud with Attolico, which originated in a conflict of political opinion and methods of work, became ever more embittered and sullen. Once I had to rush off to Rome to insist on speaking to Mussolini, as I had been told that on one of his visits to the city a few

days previously, the Ambassador had successfully appealed for disciplinary action against me.

When I returned to my post, I swore I would have my revenge. The German Government was on the point of starting naval negotiations with the British Government which later led to the agreement which stabilized the proportions of the two fleets and of the submarines. At the Wilhelmstrasse they were working day and night to compile a note which was to be handed by Ribbentrop to the English Government. One of my scouts gave me the opportunity of making a splendid scoop. He rushed into my house in the Meranerstrasse, at 6 a.m., with fragments of paper on which were transcribed in French some extracts from the German note. We started patiently to make a piece of mosaic work until at length the document had been completely reconstructed. Then I got through on the telephone to the Agenzia Stefani in Rome and dictated the note in full. Then I gave a summary of it, as if it were my only communication with them, derived from information I had received. I requested them to publish the summary immediately and to wait until I gave the signal for the release of the official document. I did not want to have trouble with the Wilhelmstrasse. The Deutsches Nachrichten Bureau released the short summary together with a statement that the note had been sent to Mr. Eden by the German Ambassador. I called up Rome, and said that the document could now be published in full. This was done immediately, and in that way the Italian newspapers were ahead of all other countries with the news next morning. It was the only time I succeeded in beating my worthy colleagues and friends of the Associated Press, Reuter and Havas, who were usually better informed than I was. But the satisfaction I felt at having made a good journalistic coup was blended with the presentiment that a storm

would soon burst over my head for my temerity. Next day about noon, the very same day on which, in the early dawn, the Italian press had been able to inform its readers about the German note, Attolico summoned all the Italian correspondents to a press conference. He had just returned that moment from an interview with the German Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and was holding in his hand some sheets of paper as well as the German note, from which he read extracts, warning us, however, not to send anything for publication pending instructions from the Wilhelmstrasse.

What was I to do? Ought I to have warned Attolico that, owing to my action, the document was already published in Italy? I recalled that he had tried to ruin me by turning my employers against me. While I was brooding over the matter the telephone started ringing. It was Palazzo Chigi whom the Ambassador had rung up to give them the news. I left Attolico to face his disillusionment and surprise when he had learned about my coup.

All that day the embassy was looking for me, but I was not to be found. Later on in the evening, however, I could not decline the definite invitation to call on the Ambassador. Apparently Palazzo Chigi had remonstrated in very strong terms with Attolico because they had got the news after it had been given to the press; but protests must likewise have come from the Wilhelmstrasse. He began the conversation with a long preamble in which he tried to appear calm, although I saw rancor glinting in his eyes behind the thick convex glasses. He told me that I was not to be afraid to give him the name of the official in the embassy who, according to him, had given me the information. I saw that he had only a very vague idea as to what had happened. I replied that the man who gave me the news did not live in the embassy. Then he tried to make me tell him

from what other source the information had reached me. I told him nothing, of course. I could not betray a poor devil of an employee, who would have been immediately thrown into the street along with his family. Attolico tried to pry out of me a statement as to which of the German ministries, the Foreign Office or the Propaganda Office, had given me the news in advance. I did my best to make him understand in a few words which allowed of no reply that he was wasting his time, as he would get nothing out of me. He bade me farewell very frigidly.

Others before me have told how difficult it is for correspondents of foreign papers in Berlin to attend to their work without risk of annoyance. As soon as the Nazis came to power, attempts on the part of the Government to exercise pressure on foreign correspondents began to be very evident. Otto Dietrich had barely taken over his job as head of the Press Bureau when he began sniping at the Foreign Press Union. The president of this organization was Edgar Mowrer, of the *Chicago Daily News*, a journalist of the finest democratic type, a courageous writer, and an excellent friend to all of us. His charming wife, Mrs. Mowrer, spoke Italian perfectly, and was always eager to have a chat with me about the happy years she spent in Rome when Edgar covered that city. Both of them, not in order to pay compliments to me, but in tones of deep sincerity, used to maintain that merely to live in Italy, notwithstanding the blow given by Fascism to democratic ideals, was far easier and far more agreeable than having to endure the oppressive atmosphere generated by Hitler's Germany.

The personnel of the Ministry knew what the attitude of my American colleague was. Their resentment against him was evinced when the Union was informed, unofficially, of course, that it would either be suppressed or banned and excluded from all official relations whatsoever, if Mowrer

did not resign the post which he held as president. A general meeting of the Union was hurriedly convened, and I recollect that all who turned up spoke in terms that showed they were solidly behind Edgar and would back him through thick and thin. The possibility of a voluntary winding-up of the organization as a protest was canvassed, but it was opposed by the Dutch and Scandinavian members. Mowrer voluntarily resigned the post himself a few days later, when he was recalled to the United States.

Louis P. Lochner of the Associated Press, who succeeded him, was more successful, not because he was more flexible, but because the deep dislike entertained towards his predecessor did not exist in his case. This was because Lochner had been in Germany for a greater number of years, had a German wife, and spoke the language of the country almost better than the Germans themselves. Yet for all that, the attempts to bring pressure to bear on the Union was not given up even under this new leadership. Decrees for the expulsion of "undesirable" correspondents followed at a striking crescendo. No president of the Foreign Press Union was ever so brilliant as Lochner. He had the knack of impressing the functionaries of the Hitler regime and twisting them round his little finger, with his witty glibness in after-dinner speeches and on all ceremonial occasions. They really could not make out whether he was a friend or an enemy, but they decided to allow that he was a broad-minded, reasonable man, and they left it at that.

The general meeting of the Foreign Press Union, in 1937, made me president, thinking perhaps that the fact of having an Italian at the helm would protect them from the unending venom of Nazi circles. It made a mistake in doing so, for dynamite had been placed under my presidential chair. Dietrich evidently expected that I would hand over to him the Union on a platter; as that did not happen, he

invariably received me with an angry frown. He practically held me responsible if attacks on the policy of Germany were published in any foreign paper written by its Berlin correspondent. Very frequently I was obliged to intervene in order to get orders for expulsion revoked. I got no support from my Italian colleagues, who took absolutely no interest in the Union. Some of them were not only out and out Fascists, but notorious for their pro-German sentiments. I found myself, in consequence, carrying on a lone fight between the demands of the German Government and the right which the Union claimed to maintain its own democratic character. How I managed to carry on that fight, in addition to all the trouble Attolico gave me I don't know. At the end of my year's term as president, I was preparing to give up my office, with a feeling of relief at having the chance to regain a little of my normal tranquillity of mind, when the Union re-elected me, not knowing that in doing so, they were practically digging my grave.



### III. CAESARS AMONG THEM

THERE ARE EVOLUTIONS WHICH, EVEN IN SPITE OF THE MOST subtle arguments and when allowances have been made for the most extenuating circumstances, it is impossible to explain from a human standpoint. One of these is the evolution of Mussolini. He is a son of the Mediterranean, with a Mediterranean outlook, and not likely to be impressed by the historical entity of Central Europe. From the point of view of any Roman and Latin mentality—a mentality of which Mussolini was a typical product—beyond the Alps there could only exist races of a different culture and mentality. Almost the only Southerner whose views were an exception to this Latin and Roman bias was Dante, who was endowed with a more cosmic inspiration and saw in the intervention of a Nordic prince the salvation of Italy during the period of fierce regional feuds throughout the peninsula.

But in our days the Middle Ages and the Holy Roman Empire of Germanic nations was forgotten; forgotten, too, were the inevitable interventions of foreigners during that era. Italy was herself once more, intent on developing a lasting national order of her own, inspired by the record of Rome's glory and a jealously treasured consciousness of her own ethnical, cultural and traditional prerogatives. If

the Italian people, during the era of Liberalism, had broken away from this tradition, in order to follow the great developments of thought and life which emanated directly from the North, Mussolini with his Fascism aimed at reviving the consciousness of Italy's own moral strength would not have caught on.

When Mussolini seized power, he carried in his heart the vision of the Roman Empire. He knew that the fulfilment of his dream would very probably entail war, but it was also possible that he harbored the illusion that he could pattern himself on Ancient Rome, which sometimes by the power of its sheer prestige and an adroit exercise of diplomacy, succeeded in adding new dominions to the vast ones it already possessed. In Mussolini's mind, however, the imperial ideal was in a merely embryonic stage; it was a propagandist ideal. How to proceed in order to realize that ideal he did not know, nor was he anxious to know.

Mussolini was anti-German from birth, and remained anti-German all his life. No people in Europe other than the Germans could have accepted a Nazi political organization. In fact, wherever analogous movements started, they developed into ridiculous plagiarisms of the organization that Hitler gave to his own country. Mussolini was exasperated by the mere fact that there were affinities between Fascism and Nazism, for he had always been convinced that he himself had created something original and inimitable. He would have preferred that Hitler should speak like Bismarck and act like Moltke. In 1914 Mussolini broke away from the Italian Socialist Party to join the campaign against Germany; he actually fought against the Austrians and Germans, and was wounded in action.

Although he was not satisfied with the result of the war, and maintained that the Allies had not fulfilled the prom-

ises made by them in the Treaty of London, Mussolini could not resist the pleasure of apostrophizing Stresemann in his own newspaper, as well as later on, in the Chamber of Deputies. He ridiculed "the dull Teutons, who with feathers in their hats and with hob-nailed shoes, posing as tourists, went swaggering around with a self-sufficient air through the beautiful Italian cities."

So it is obvious that Mussolini had neither love nor respect for the German people or the German mentality. Furthermore, his attitude never changed for ten years after he had taken over the reins of government. The Italians, who, immediately after Mussolini had risen to power, had seen him perform the gesture of sending warships to Corfu to frighten Greece because some gangsters had murdered two Italian officials, realized after some time how inconsistent his policy was. One day they would read in the Fascist press wild attacks on Germany; another day France would be pilloried. England, on the other hand, was never attacked, unless the violent outburst against Liberalism and Democracy that appeared in Mussolini's papers could be regarded as anti-British. It was not until later that the day was to come when Gayda and his companions, at a hint from Mussolini, would snipe vulgarly at Anthony Eden when he made himself at Geneva the champion of the sanctions against Italy. These outbursts of the Italian press had become a matter of routine, and the world no longer wondered at them. The journalists of Fascism—and Mussolini regarded himself as their leader—were known for their blatancy. Even in Germany the trumpet blasts issued by Rome were not taken seriously.

The attitude of antagonism towards Berlin was destined to disappear imperceptibly and slowly. At first the metamorphosis was inexplicable. In Italy, a sudden wave of Germanophilism swept political and journalistic circles; but

it did not reach the masses. What did the masses know of things, kept as they were in complete ignorance of what was going on? Mussolini needed the masses merely as a decorative background for the regime; he never consulted them. He created the Chamber of Fascios and Corporations by an arbitrary act, putting his signature, so to speak, at the foot of a roll of national councillors elected, not by the people, but by the Party machine. Periodical elections to express the will of the people were never held in Italy after the day Mussolini went to Rome. The Duce remembered the people only when he wanted to get a thrill from appealing to the grey, drab listening mob; it gave him extraordinary pleasure, for he visualized it as direct dialogue between himself and the crowd, free from all external influences. Sometimes he directed questions to his mob in order to feel its presence more intimately; when he had received a reply he resumed his spate of bold terse rhetoric.

Mussolini never thought of his 45,000,000 Italians until it was a question of demanding sacrifices from them—today a national loan, tomorrow a military enterprise. As the people gave no indication of any need or even desire to take part in political activity, Mussolini revelled in the satisfying feeling that he could do whatever he wished with them and with Italy, and embark on any adventure that appealed to him. He had conferred benefits on the nation, it was for the nation to give him in return its staunch support.

But although I was aware that Mussolini reacted readily either to sympathy or antipathy, I would never have believed that those emotions swayed him to such an extent as they actually did. The appointment of Galeazzo Ciano to a post in the Cabinet marked the development of a new atmosphere. Ciano was a young man of unbounded ambition. Basing his hopes on his relationship with the

Duce, he doubtless believed that he might one day be his successor. Ciano had raised himself by the help of the Duce; he now threatened his benefactor. If, however, Mussolini had really seen that his son-in-law was working against him and for his own ambitious ends, why did he allow him to go on? Was it the outcome of paternal weakness for Edda, the daughter whom he idolized? Or was it just a psychological flaw in a politician?

Nobody knows what transpired inside the Mussolini family circle to make him depart from his hide-bound ideas and conventions. Suffice it to say that Ciano came into power, though it ought not to be assumed that he was able to exercise a determining influence. The fact is that a different wind began to blow in Rome, and we who were in a foreign land were soon apprised of it from the orders that emanated from there.

We were requested especially to use more courteous language to Nazi Germany, avoiding criticism, and rather laying emphasis on the two movements "which Providence has designed to confer on this earth in order to make it happy." Suddenly we were asked to support Hitler's war-like policy with weighty arguments aimed at showing that Germany had been obliged to adopt a policy of action merely because she was forced to do so by the other States, that she had adopted that policy solely in the interests of justice and to tackle the tasks confronting Europe. We were to gloss over casual deficiencies and contradictions that existed in the Hitlerian system, and to emphasize always more and more the indispensable co-operation between Rome and Berlin. When we met of an evening in a café, some of us journalists used to make fun of these turns and twists in Fascist policy. There were Francesco Antinori, a journalist on our staff, and Massimo Caputo of the *Gazzetta del Popolo* (whose Jewish wife belonging

to a Frankfort family, had been kept shut up in the German Customs office when she was travelling from Berlin to Vienna, and had been roughly treated and stripped naked because they expected to find some compromising documents on her person) and occasionally Pietro Solari of the *Corriere della Sera*. Solari, who knew Ciano very well, as he had worked with him in the office of the *Tevere*, expressed the view that we should not be astonished at what was going on, and that the young minister was an absolutely unscrupulous man. I myself later on got to know Edda fairly well and decided that she was a very whimsical and capricious woman, full of haughtiness and eccentricity like the Duce, in fact, that she was morally an exact replica of her father.

In the Ministries at Rome changes were made which bore the stamp of Ciano's influence. Capable and faithful officials were dismissed overnight, and their places taken by young nonentities with very little experience, who were known to be Galeazzo's friends. From the outset he had a habit of gathering around him a band of restless mediocrities who were devoted to him, and whom he took into his confidence so fully that they strutted about like peacocks as though they were the custodians of important secrets of state. Others of the same genus began to turn up in Berlin, and the Ambassador used to confer with them for many hours in his study. It was difficult, however, to guess what part was played by Massimo Magistrati, Ciano's kinsman, who, while most cordial to me and even seeming to encourage me to stand up to the Ambassador, was on good terms with my opponents. Yet everything led me to infer that, by virtue especially of his personal prestige, he would work for an Italo-German pact.

Magistrati's wife who was in the habit of confiding incautiously the great projects of the Ciano family, both

father and son, to all and sundry, used to boast that everything was now changed in Rome, and that Mussolini merely obeyed the wishes of Ciano. When Signora Magistrati died, her husband brought a lawsuit over the will, against his kinsman, Ciano, and instead of the promising career for which it was said, he was destined, he died as a minister at Sofia, completely forgotten.

The thing that interested me most was the reaction of the Germans. The embassy in Rome could not have failed to inform the Wilhelmstrasse about the new wind that blew on the banks of the Tiber. Fascist policy no longer showed a deliberately anti-German bias; on the contrary, it seemed from that moment to favor all the movements towards revision of the Versailles Treaty. Even in the Danubian region in which Italy herself was very keenly interested, readjustments were urged on condition of coming to an understanding about the sharing of the spoils. The Germans were convinced that Ciano might be a guarantee of collaboration, and had not failed to look into the possibility of easily winning over the ambitious young minister to a closer co-operation with the Reich, by giving him the hope that his name would be linked with a glorious epoch of Italian history.

Then began the first visits of Nazi officials to Rome for the purpose of feeling the way. Marshal von Blomberg, Minister of Defense, received an official invitation to Rome, in order to see for himself what Italy's military preparations were like. It was this trip, in my opinion, that started the headlong path to ruin. When von Blomberg made his report to Hitler at Berchtesgaden, he must have given a detailed account of what he had seen in Italy, and affirmed that it did not quite come up to the general impression that had prevailed. He must have made it clear to Hitler that Italy was very far from being the military power that

all Europe thought her, and that in that direction what little the Duce had done had been in a slovenly fashion. Mussolini, he discovered, had neglected to supply his armies with the latest modern weapons. Von Blomberg reported that the army was still equipped with old Skoda artillery taken from the Austrians in World War I—artillery that by now was forty years behind the times, though it had undergone a few trivial modifications in order to utilize it for mountain warfare. He realized, in fact, that Mussolini's conception of military tactics had remained in the 1915-1918 stage, when it was all just a question of static warfare. Von Blomberg thought that the developments that had been attained by Fascism in the domain of aviation, through the work of Italo Balbo, were hardly appreciable, and he had not failed to observe that the Italian aeronautical industry did not possess one plant needed for large-scale production. Von Blomberg had left for Italy fully convinced that he would see a wonderful pattern of what a warlike nation should be; what he saw instead was mere dilettantism.

In my view this discovery must have made Hitler come to a prompt decision. It would certainly be the essence of naïveté to think that even a thoroughly armed Italy would have held back the ruler of Nazi Germany, but the knowledge that the peninsula on the other side of the Brenner was in a state of weakness from a military point of view must have substantially contributed to the speeding up of events. In fact it is very significant that the first act of positive aggression that Hitler perpetrated was at the expense of Austria. Barely two years previously Mussolini had called out his emphatic, "Halt," when Germany had contemplated moving.

If Hitler had hitherto believed that Mussolini was all-powerful, France and England on the other hand under-

estimated Hitler's strength. For some time they let him have his way and failed to adopt measures that were essential to check him. They confined themselves to protests that left Hitler indifferent. In his speech in the Reichstag, after the denunciation of the Locarno Pact, the Fuehrer realized that he had made an ineluctable decision. He expected France to react violently to the appearance of German troops in the Rhineland, now no longer demilitarized. He even considered the possibility of war. But the French Government confined itself to a feeble protest to the League of Nations, and the next day instructed their Ambassador to return to Hitler to resume the negotiations as though nothing had happened. The British Government preferred to leave the initiative to Paris. No wonder, then, that German propaganda a week later could start anew its voluble protests, turning its attention this time to the Sudeten Germans.

A glimpse of the situation in those days and months is sufficient to convince one that the Wilhelmstrasse had become the pole towards which the eyes of all Europe were directed. A constant stream of British Conservative lords and some Liberal Members of Parliament turned up in Berlin, their apparent object being to feel the pulse of the sick nation who, on her bed of bayonets and guns, was every moment going into convulsive fits. Lord Rothermere came to the German capital at least twice that year. Among the most frequent visitors, however, Lord Londonderry, Lord Lothian and Lord Astor were prominent, all more or less convinced that Hitler could be induced to accept a program of peace for a definite period. The reason for the persistent visits of these noblemen was that Hitler had given them some grounds for hoping that he would evolve a more moderate political program. No sooner had one of these British notables set foot in the German capital

than the Nazi press indulged in a jeremiad about the victimization of poor Germany.

In Austria the Nazis, for the most part imported from across the German frontier, succeeded by their propaganda in preparing the crisis for which Hitler was waiting to warrant the use of physical force. In the middle of February, 1938, the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg, was invited to go to Berchtesgaden to have a conference with the Fuehrer. At that moment, with what was virtually a threat hanging over his head, Schuschnigg must have realized that this was rather an order than an invitation. When he was ushered into the Fuehrer's presence, he found him surrounded by generals looking as solemn as owls, just as though they had been convened for a court trial. There can be no doubt that these generals were there to show the representative of Austria that there was indeed an army to back up the Nazi Government.

What demands did Hitler make on Schuschnigg? Nothing less than that all the Nazis who had been arrested by the Austrian authorities should be released immediately, that the National Socialist Party in Austria should have representation, and that without delay a seat should be given in the Cabinet to a member in Hitler's confidence—that is to say, to Seyss-Inquart, who should be entrusted with the important portfolio of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I was at breakfast that morning with Doctor Meyer, director of the Deutsches Nachrichten Bureau, when I was informed by telephone of what had happened. I was amazed that Meyer knew nothing about it, although he was the head of the official agency. Perhaps he was merely pretending ignorance of a matter which had been well discussed in Nazi political circles, and had been planned some weeks before.

Hitler's communication to Schuschnigg was nothing

more nor less than an ultimatum, for, as I afterwards learned, he threatened to send the Reichswehr into Austria if his demands were not accepted. I was impatient to learn what attitude Rome had taken, because there was a definite agreement between Italy and Austria, and Schuschnigg, like the late Dollfuss, had received from Mussolini a precise assurance that Italy would be on Austria's side should danger threaten. I could not help wondering whether we would witness a repetition of the gesture of two years previously, when Mussolini sent troops to the Brenner to intimidate Hitler. But I was mistaken. Rome had changed. Mussolini was no longer anxious to come to the aid of Schuschnigg. All the guarantees given to Austria by the Fascist Government proved worthless; Ciano's intrigues had triumphed. But not only did Italy stand aloof. France and Great Britain did likewise, as though Germany had the right to jump on the back of little Austria, which in the past had received so many exhortations both from Paris and London—to say nothing of Rome—to resist any attempt at aggression. My heart bled for my Viennese friends whose sufferings I pictured in my mind. On the spur of the moment I dashed off a few sympathetic lines which I despatched to the *Neuigkeits Weltblatt*, which had formerly published, under a pseudonym, a few of my articles.

On the morning of March 12 the first German divisions entered Austrian territory from the direction of Linz. I went immediately to Vienna on the instructions of Giorgio Pini, the managing editor of the *Popolo d'Italia*, who impressed on me the importance of giving "a thorough and rousing account" of the occupation of Austria. I fancied that he meant, "follow up the developments of an Italian victory." But for Giorgio Pini, an enthusiastic admirer of Germany, as he once described himself to me as though it

was something to be very proud of, this was not a day of sorrow and dishonor, but one of jubilation.

During the course of my journey I was informed that the Nazis of Linz had welcomed the German Nazis with bouquets and placards bearing the words: "Down with Italy! Down with Mussolini!" These Austrian Nazis, knowing nothing of the secret intrigues of the politicians, thought they were still in the days when Italy adopted a challenging attitude when Austria was outraged. It was said that this misunderstanding put Hitler into a perfect frenzy. While he was waiting to enter Austria as soon as his troops had occupied Vienna, he received a visit from Prince Filippo d'Assia, who had come specially by plane from Rome bearing an enthusiastic letter from the Duce, congratulating his German brother dictator on his energetic action with regard to Austria.

There was no fighting. The little Austrian nation, already under the heel of the Nazis, had lost all inclination to resist. That same night Schuschnigg was superseded by Seyss-Inquart. It was now clear why Hitler had been so insistent that this man should go to the Ballhausplatz; it was, so to speak, slipping a dagger in the clothing of an accomplice.

In Hitler's wake also followed the Prince von Hessen as well as Dietrich, with both of whom I was very anxious to keep in touch as I hoped through their medium to let the Fuehrer know that I was there to interview him on the instructions of my paper. It was the Prince who acted as intermediary and took me to Hitler. He had already put on his cap, getting ready to leave his quarters to go to a meeting in the Schloss. The head of Nazi Germany did not give me his hand this time. He fixed me instead for some moments with fanatical eyes that betrayed the interior tumult of his soul. Choosing his words carefully, he exclaimed, "Say, through the medium of your paper, that I am grateful

to Mussolini for what he has done. Mussolini is a great statesman, and I shall never forget the attitude he has adopted on this occasion." As I was not satisfied with the plain statement, which struck me as only of relative importance after all, he added a few other commonplace phrases and statements beneath which it was easy to see the profound satisfaction he felt in his soul at finding himself the patron, so to speak, of Austria—the Austria from which, many years previously, as a very young man, he had shaken the dust from his feet because he was disgusted with its corrupt system of life.

That evening Dietrich expressed a desire that I should accompany him on a tour through the streets of Vienna, which he was now visiting for the first time. He proposed treating himself to a visit to a Viennese boite to see the beautiful women. He had changed from his uniform into civilian clothes. But we found every place closed—in most cases because the Jewish proprietors had fled, and in others because of the shortage of staff. We strolled around for an hour, always coming up against locked doors. We were obliged at length to ask a passer-by for guidance. He was, of course, unaware that he was talking to one of Hitler's chief henchmen, and told us quite candidly his views about things, indulging alternately in lamentations over Austria's fate and curses on the Nazis, whose advent meant the utter ruin of his country. "You won't find any show open," he said. "For us Viennese this day is a day of sorrow." While he was talking I was trying to study in the semi-darkness the hardening expression on my illustrious companion's face.

The account of my brief interview with Hitler had the effect he had intended. A new link in the chain of the Axis had been forged. As I foresaw, I found Attolico jubilant on my return and unusually lavish in his hospitality. Tem-

peramentally tight-fisted, he broke the fetters of a life-long habit, and gave us a very sumptuous reception.

Weeks merged into months without anything being heard from Rome. The echo of a speech by Chamberlain in the House of Commons, in which he regretted that he had been unable to adopt any efficacious measures owing to the momentary military unpreparedness of Great Britain, reached our ears. It was only in the capitals of the little Danubian and Balkan States that cries of alarm and protests were made about the manner in which the sacrifice of Austria had been allowed to pass unchallenged.

But suddenly the telephones between Rome and Berlin started ringing again. I felt that something big was afoot, but I failed to guess what it was. Magistrati, it was obvious, had some secret which he kept to himself. One got an inkling from his animated expression, from his frequent nods and winks, and from certain reticences and strange allusions. It was the visit of Hitler to Italy that was being arranged. Attolico devoted all his zeal and all the technique of his long experience to the preparations for this visit. I believe that in the mere drawing-up of the protocols more than a hundred telegrams were exchanged between the two capitals. In addition to these the long list of points that were to be emphasized in the conversations had to be drawn up. Somebody suggested that it would be better to leave the two chiefs free to carry on their discussions untrammelled by schemes and plans, seeing that, after all, it was not a meeting "between two men of ordinary calibre, but between two demigods." I know that everybody had a special task allotted to him. The Agenzia Stefani arranged that it should get an exclusive account of all the proceedings. On behalf of the Agency I was instructed to accompany the Fuehrer in his special train all through the trip, while the other journalists, both Italian and German,

would go to Rome in a press train organized by the Minister of Propaganda. Any other man, with feelings different from mine, would have been proud of this privilege, but I was only irritated at the prospect. I imagined that my work would be confined to the usual chronicling of triumphal gatherings, padded out with an abundance of flattering adjectives, for which I felt very little inclination; moreover, I foresaw that even physically, it would be an utterly exhausting ordeal.

We left the Anhalter railway station to the strains of military bands and the din raised by hundreds of urchins in the uniform of the Hitler Youth. I was ushered into a spacious coach very unlike ordinary railway compartments, a luxurious apartment with all the necessary writing conveniences.

The following morning we reached the Brenner Pass where the first salute was given to our guest, first by the Duke of Bergamo and the court officials, secondly by a delegation from the Government with Achille Starace representing the Party. My job was to write my reports during our journey, and to pass them on at every station at which the train stopped, to messengers of the Agency, who were standing by to receive them.

All along the line from the Brenner to Naples—for after Rome the itinerary included the route to the Parthenopean city—soldiers of the Militia and Carabinieri had been posted as a guard of honor every hundred yards, on both sides of the railway line. I reckon that over 100,000 men must have been required for the job. All the house-fronts that faced the line were decorated with placards and banners on which were inscribed in gigantic letters slogans in praise of Hitler and the Italo-German friendship.

During the course of the journey the Fuehrer did not, so

far as I know, do any official work, but spent the greater part of his time looking out of the window, every now and then consulting a map of the line on which were marked all the stations through which the train passed. In his company were most frequently Ribbentrop, Keitel and Thomsen, who was then Councillor of the Legation and acted as an interpreter. But Hess and Goebbels also travelled by the same train. Twice I was invited to a meal with the Fuehrer. I observed that when the dessert came he retired to his private compartment, and that when he had vanished the others promptly indulged in an animated conversation, smoking their cigars with relish, a luxury that was prohibited in the presence of the Fuehrer. In this way I had a chat with each one of them, and especially with Ambassador von Mackensen, from whom I expected some information about the political significance of the visit. A characteristic of the conversations that took place on all occasions of Italo-German demonstrations was that nothing tangible was ever said; there was nothing but an interchange of stupid compliments. I never heard a subject discussed exhaustively, and least of all, a subject dealing with foreign policy. In fact, it seems to me that a deliberate effort was made to evade discussions of this kind.

Here is just a sample of the kind of conversation on Hitler's train en route through Italy:

"What do you think of this trip?"

"Wonderful!"

"Did you notice how the crowd cheered for the Fuehrer at Bologna?"

"Yes. It was all unsurpassable, fantastic, simply fantastic! Do you think it will be better still in Rome?"

"Why not? Of course. In Rome you will see the climax."

"Fascism is truly a wonderful thing. Our two leaders will make history. Your Duce is a genius. Yes—I mean a genius."

We reached Rome late in the evening, alighting at a station outside the walls, which had been beflagged and decorated for the occasion, a station on which the bombs of the Royal Air Force were to fall at a later date during their raid on the Eternal City. Still blinded by the searchlights, I found myself, I know not how, on the Via dell'Impero, where I witnessed the mad charge of a troop of native African cavalry, resplendent with their horsecloths and caftans—a sight suggestive of a scene from the Arabian Nights. The Colosseum looked as if it were on fire. In the general confusion somebody gripped my arm, and pushed me into a carriage. It was Manlio Morgagni, the president of Stefani, in a Sahara uniform, his chest literally covered with cavalry medals. My news service had gone very well, he said, with the Ministry—but I would need to put more soul and more sincerity into it. Sincerity! What a word! Who, I asked myself, had shown this sincerity, starting from Mussolini, who had desired such an extraordinary stage setting, and ending with the rest of the bunch, his servile imitators.

Nothing was done that night. Exhausted by my journey and by anguish of soul I went to the hotel and slept. In the same hotel, the Maestoso—formerly the Majestic, but after the imposition of sanctions Mussolini had changed all the names of streets and establishments from their French and English titles—stayed the delegates of the German Ministry of Propaganda, headed by Boehmer, as well as all the representatives of the foreign press. Boehmer was exuberant to find himself amidst all the splendor of the Rome of those days. He followed with rapture the procession of Roman girls with very short skirts and flashing eyes.

As for the people of Rome, they continued their normal routine of life and did not trouble themselves too much about Hitler. Hitler's visit was the theme of many jocose remarks in the city. The police had arrested thousands of

even perfectly innocent people as a measure of precaution. The German guests were kept busy attending the numerous receptions and official banquets arranged in their honor. They were hardly able to cope with the extensive program, as they dashed to and fro along the Via Veneto, while in the evenings they mingled in the luxurious hotel bars with the citizens who looked on with casual indifference at such sights as that of a couple of Germans sitting in the bar of the Maestoso in a condition of helpless drunkenness after having spent all the money they possessed. I ran into the corpulent Bruckner, one of Hitler's adjutants, who was radiant because, at a banquet at the Quirinal, he had sat beside an authentic princess of royal blood, who was, furthermore, a very beautiful woman. He had had a most delightful chat with her, at the end of which, at his request, she had taken her visiting card from her purse and given it to him. This visiting card he showed to everyone he met, as though it were a trophy won by him in battle.

As for the Fuehrer, he simply gorged himself on archæology. Not satisfied with official visits to the chief monuments, in which he was always accompanied by Mussolini, on whose lips was forever an enigmatical smile, half-ironical, half self-satisfied, Hitler used to leave the Quirinal early in the morning to do a bit of exploring on his own account. He was fascinated especially by the Pantheon, to which he returned twice. Again and again he expressed his admiration for the technical skill of the Roman architects who could construct such everlasting walls and vaults. The military reviews and air demonstrations went off with indifferent success, because Jupiter Pluvius chose to display his capricious power just in time to hamper them. Mussolini had staged those parades for the express purpose of impressing Hitler about Italy's military might, but it was obvious that these reviews mattered far less to Hitler than the pros-

pect of conquering the spirit of the Italian people and tethering Mussolini and Fascism to his own chariot.

On the evening of May 3 he spoke after the Duce from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia before a crowd picked by the Propaganda Department of the Party and by the Police Commissioner. A special body of agents had been hired to mingle with the crowd, and make the requisite noises expected from an enthusiastic gathering. The Fuehrer, who was choked with emotion, made a grand gesture. In solemn tones he declared that he had given up for good all claims to the Alto Adige, which would remain an Italian province forever, and added that he would bequeath the observance of this oath of renunciation to his successor, as a spiritual legacy. As a matter of fact, when Northern Italy was occupied after Badoglio's armistice, did not the Germans promptly declare that the Alto Adige would once more become a German province?

The European chancelleries regarded this memorable evening merely as another of the Fuehrer's theatrical gestures that was destined to leave things as it found them. It was, they thought, just an exchange of courteous sentiments between two dictators, which could not possibly have any important European reactions. In reality, however, the European Governments would have given much to know what were the secret agreements drawn up between Hitler and Mussolini for the government of their future policy on the continent—arrangements, the nature of which never came to light. Apparently, the agreement between them was, for the moment, drawn up on broad general lines; but that a political pact was a thing of the future could be taken as definitely settled. It is exceedingly unlikely that Hitler would take Mussolini into his confidence with regard to all his plans. It would not have been the first time that he reserved the right of springing certain surprises even

on his very best friends. But it may be taken for granted that Mussolini knew about the attack on Czechoslovakia.

From Rome the visitors proceeded to Naples, in order to give Hitler an opportunity to inspect the Italian naval forces.

In Florence, Mussolini followed the Fuehrer faithfully from gallery to gallery, where the masterpieces of Raphael, Giotto, Piero Della Francesca, Botticelli, Mantegna, Michelangelo, Veronese, and a thousand others seemed to warn Italy's guest, satiated with battles and conquests, that there were other values, the values of the spirit, that made life more worth living than all the aspirations for material domination.

After Florence the Nazis started for home. But not before they had rifled the shops of Florence of magnificent lace, of works of art, and in some cases of more commonplace things such as silk and foodstuffs, which they took back with them to Germany.

The visit had marked the beginning of a period which I foresaw would be very stormy. The Government Offices in Rome were by now completely dominated by the idea of forming a bloc of forces, which they called the Axis, extending from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. This was to replace the Rome-London balance which had been for many years a guarantee of peace for Europe. They did not realize that they were thereby playing Germany's game without in any way serving the interests of Italy. They did not see the violent tempest approaching rapidly out of the North. They did not plumb the depths of Hitler's policy, and did not so much as suspect that Hitler had taken the trouble to come to Rome for ends of his own. Nor did they guess why the Reich suddenly displayed such an interest in an Italy which, until then, had been considered an obstacle to the German plans of conquest in Southeastern Europe.

They did not perceive that Rome, by agreeing to this bloc, was becoming an accomplice of Berlin in an adventure fraught with the most tragic possibilities.

There was much talk about the "personal friendship" between the two leaders, as though it were a reliable guarantee. But this "personal friendship," even admitting that it was a fact, which it could not be because of the temperaments of the two men, could not constitute any guarantee, for in order to be such a guarantee, it would need to be backed by the approval of the two nations.

Why, then, did Mussolini fall into Hitler's trap? He was aware of the efforts which London, especially, was making to avoid a future clash of armed forces in Europe, and in its infancy had even co-operated in this task of conciliation. The Duce knew that neither London nor Paris wanted a war, and that a war would not be approved by their respective parliaments except as a matter of extreme and ineluctable necessity. Like any other statesman on the political stage, he ought at least to have surmised that Hitler was arming, in the teeth of England and France, to conquer Europe in accordance with his own grandiose dream.

We must only conclude that Mussolini's powers were waning, because otherwise he would not have acted as he did. It was clear that what led to his precipitate downfall as a politician and as a statesman was his congenital worship of mere brute force. This had accompanied him from infancy, and triumphed over every principle of moderation. Mussolini in fact, discovered unexpectedly in Hitler and in Nazi Germany what he had not wished to perceive in them for so many years, and that was the ideal of force asserting itself, and the dynamic capable of leading to the creation of a world different from the old world. He was destined to miscalculate, as he had miscalculated so many other times, when it was a question of interpreting men and events.

Furthermore, what was he himself until then? The obstinate, rabid, obsessed bandit of Fascism who aimed at making the whole nation Fascist. Yet he did not succeed in his aim. Italy had become accustomed to Fascism, as in time one becomes accustomed to anything. The Italian people never knew what it was in reality, for Mussolini's pronouncements with regard to it were constantly shifting. He had not only not defined and created a system, but he had hardly so much as employed an evolutionary process.

If Mussolini had disclosed his own ideas and his own program to the nation in that crucial moment when he decided to link the fate of Italy with that of Germany, the nation would not have given its consent. But he did not do so. Instead he acted arbitrarily, and following his instincts he relied on his own strength as a dictator.



#### IV. OBSERVATION POST

I MUST TALK ABOUT THE SUMMERS OF CAPRI. WHO CAN SAY how long it will be until I enjoy such summers again; until I can return each year to get fresh mental and bodily vigor? I used to make my way back to Capri from the far-off places where I had worked with the express purpose of forgetting the irritations, the fatigues and the disillusionments of my task. There are glorious moments when the island of Tiberius, bathed in dazzling brilliance, is an image of paradise on this earth; you fancy you hear the land sighing for the water, as though a subterranean mysterious sap were rising through the vegetation of the island. Capri unfolds to the sun its gardens full of gourds and orange trees which seem aglow with little flames. At noontide it is delightful to loiter on the little square, which is a kaleidoscopic change of types and races, with a medley of idioms from all parts of the world. At the sound of the church bell the birds scatter in a panic and everybody nearby is obliged to stop his ears. If you do not buy the newspaper from the news agent on the square, you know nothing about what is happening in the world. If you do not tune in the radio at the proper hour you live in a child-like ignorance of the happenings of our

sorrow-smitten era. What a pity that these moments of rest are so fleeting!

Had it not been for the large numbers of German tourists, some of whom were leading personalities whose presence recalled the turbulent political phase brought about in Europe by the Fatherland, who in Capri would have thought of the crisis that was about to come to a head in Czechoslovakia? When I left Rome there was nothing in the air to suggest imminent complications, for Rome is a city with a tendency to forget everything—even war itself—a city which someone described as inhabited by cynics and parasites, simply because he failed to understand its indifference towards the great dramatic happenings in the life of Europe. But the Romans are built that way. Nothing will arouse them from their phlegmatic attitude and from their indifference; under the protection of the dome of Saint Peter's, and favored by the special blessing of the Holy Father they seem to carry on an existence unaffected by mundane happenings.

Having witnessed the display of studied and false camaraderie that was made so much of between Fascists and Nazis, brought to a head by Hitler's visit, the Romans promptly proceeded to forget the very existence of a Germany, of a Fuehrer, of a cataclysm brooding over Central Europe. The Ministries were busily engaged in counting the honors and distinctions mutually exchanged by the two political parties with such lavish prodigality, and never troubled to enquire whither that political development was leading.

The brief stay of the Germans in Rome had led to the inauguration of a series of innovations on Nazi lines. Thus, to quote one instance, some people were itching to imitate the anti-Jewish propaganda though not only was there never any Jewish problem in Italy, but up to that very moment anti-Semitism had been repudiated and ridiculed by Fas-

cism. Naturally, it was a favorable opportunity for creating new commissions and new departments for giving jobs to a gang of unemployed loafers who were as incompetent as they were ambitious. In fact, I met one of them, a man who all his life had been utterly worthless, and had been dismissed from countless jobs. Well, this fatuous rascalion one day flabbergasted me with the information that he had been put in charge of the "Racial Department." Even Giovanni Ansaldi, who had written such a brilliant denunciation of the absurd and anti-historical theory of anti-Semitism, now deemed it more expedient to follow the new trend, and undertook the editorship of the daily paper *Telegafo*, in Leghorn, which was to serve as Ciano's publicity medium. But the leading spokesman of the anti-Semitic campaign was Telesio Interlandi, the managing editor of *Tevere*. The semi-aristocratic Neapolitan, Evola, had already become its theoretical exponent. One could not help thinking with commiseration of all the Jewish families in Berlin and other places in Germany, who, in order to escape persecution at the hands of the Nazis, had sacrificed almost all their worldly possessions to come to Italy with a few personal belongings. For these unhappy people their sufferings were now to begin afresh. The opportunist Dino Alfieri, having observed the growing political importance of Ciano, and accepting without question the new Germanomania policy of the Government, hastened to make certain changes in his own Ministry of Culture calculated to bring it into line as closely as possible with the Ministry so efficiently controlled in Germany by the "little doctor," Joseph Goebbels.

During my month's stay at Capri I had forgotten all those things, or rather I had deliberately refused to think about them. In those thirty days Berlin had, meanwhile, charged the first mine with a high explosive which was des-

tined to put all Central Europe into a state of confusion. The Runciman mission had encountered a thorny problem in the Sudeten region. This had been brought about by the local Nazi group, led by the schoolmaster Konrad Henlein, who had turned demagogue by special appointment by Hitler. The object aimed at was apparently autonomy within the compass of the Czechoslovakian State, but in reality preparations were on foot for annexation to the Reich, for it was clear that if the Sudeten population were placed under Henlein's absolute control, they would immediately arrange for the formality of elections to bring about the incorporation of their territory in Greater Germany. If there are Germans between Bodenbach and Eger, they are more Nazi than the Nazis themselves—or, at least they were so. Under Czech rule they never had any grounds for complaint. They never lacked anything, they had no limitation put to their rights, their German tongue was, in addition to Czech, recognized as an official language, and finally they had as much work as they wanted and were able to live very cheaply. After the annexation to Germany, the same ethnic group—which consisted in reality of ex-Austrians and not of Germans from the Reich—regretted a hundred times over that they had heeded the blandishments of Hitler, for from that unlucky day they knew nothing but heavy taxation and a rise in the cost of living. But at the time the mirage was beautiful, they became fanatically enthusiastic and mob fighting took place throughout the whole territory between Czechs and Germans.

The mission entrusted to Lord Runciman proved clearly that no departure had been made from the old tactics. The only lion that could now roar in Europe was Adolf Hitler. The other Powers had only their Press, which could do nothing but denounce the crimes premeditated in Berlin. American, English and French special correspondents

dashed about from one capital to another to verify local situations and to show the world that a second act of aggression even more brutal than the rape of Austria was on the verge of consummation. But it was realized that the Governments of London and Paris had secretly decided to permit Hitler to enter the Sudeten territory, only because it would be futile to try to stop him. In a word, the people in that region had already been sacrificed. In Paris, the followers of de Brinon bowed with deferential courtesy before the fascinating vision of a new Napoleon—a German one this time—and bewailed the decadence which had crippled France so utterly that she had to abandon even the idea of an energetic defense of her own interests in Europe. To put the matter in the most courteous phraseology, one might describe the foreign policy of the Governments of the Popular Front and of the Radicals who had followed one another as a delicate piece of embroidery made by the patient refined hands of a dignified old lady, a piece of embroidery that was of no practical use. There was a close alliance between France and Czechoslovakia, but France had not raised a finger to help the little republic with which she was so friendly. The greatest bitterness must certainly have been felt in the benches of the Vltava in Hradcany.

The stormy prelude to the drama was the Congress of the Nazi Party at Nuremberg. As was his wont, Hitler kept all Europe intent with bated breath, following in a state of the deepest apprehension the impetuous blarings of the orchestra which he directed at Nuremberg. It struck me that the audience of the European public that year instead of going to Bayreuth to hear Wagner's operas directed by Furtwängler, had gone to Nuremberg to hear symphonies of quite a different type, and Hitler left nothing undone to confirm that impression. The orchestra presented two pieces—the sonorous invective against Prague, which con-

cealed a definite threat, and the lyrico-tragic prelude to the campaign against the Jews.

Most of the journalists who went to Nuremberg, owing to the dearth of hotel accommodation, had to sleep and work for a whole week on a special train drawn up in a most uncomfortable position in a railway siding. Only a few representatives of the Press could find quarters at the Würtemberger Hof, which had been taken by storm by a number of visitors from the Sudeten territory. Two of our colleagues managed to dig in somehow in that hotel, one of them in a miserable little room that had been allotted to him, and the other in the primitive lavatory into which his typewriter had been installed out of consideration for his colleague, who could not write his article owing to the din caused by the keys. In the foyer of the Grand Hotel, where the diplomats had put up, big bets were made about the chances of war or of the Powers giving way, while somebody spread the rumor that France had mobilized and that the German armies were marching on the Sudeten frontier.

When we left after having heard the Fuehrer on the field of Luitpoldhain in his role of god of thunder and lightning, hurling taunts in his own unique style at hated adversaries and imaginary enemies, we were invited to breakfast in the castle of Nuremberg as his guests. Before breakfast, Hitler chatted with his guests for a quarter of an hour on the stone balcony that commands a view of the medieval city, but like a hostess who, having welcomed her guests, retires immediately afterwards, he did not sit with us, but was represented by Ribbentrop.

I do not claim to be a profound psychologist, but Hitler that day struck me as an excellent actor, just as Mussolini too is an actor, while Ribbentrop is merely a very third-rate dilettante. To see the Fuehrer coming down from

his throne, scowling, restless, bitter, satirical and defiant, and quite suddenly become the gentle dreamer, yearning to embrace with tender affection the city that was loved by Hans Sachs and the Meistersingers, a city which, incidentally, is a veritable jewel of medieval art—all this was well worth observing. Hitler saw a kinship between the panorama of his Nuremberg and his vision of Florence, which he considered the climax of his artistic yearnings.

In Berlin I received a summons to attend a session of the Tribunal of the People. On the summons were the words: "In connection with the Fink case." Later on I was in a position to see why I had been summoned. Werner Fink, a well-known actor at the Comedians' Cabaret in Berlin, had been arrested on a charge of anti-Nazism. He was constantly poking fun at the regime in act, which kept the audience in roars of laughter. Whenever Fink had appeared it had been impossible for me to secure admission, for the whole house was always booked.

Yet what bearing had all this on me? I should have liked to make some enquiries before turning up in court, but in the general atmosphere of suspicion rife in Berlin society in those days, I might have compromised my own position very seriously had I done so. So I arrived in court, completely ignorant of what it was all about. At any rate it gave me an opportunity of being present for the first—and last—time in my life at one of those awe-inspiring Tribunals of the People, which Nazism set up in order to carry out the more thoroughly its tyrannical role. It turned out that I was summoned merely as a witness. The charge against Fink was that he had written articles in the foreign press hostile to the regime. They hit upon me as a witness in view of my post as President of the Foreign Press Union, so that I might tell them if I had observed anything of this journalistic activity on the part of Fink.

The sessions of the Tribunal were held at that time in a new building in the Bellevuestrasse, not far from the office of our association, which was in the Hotel Esplanade. In the center of a spacious hall, which had been recently painted, beneath a huge portrait of the Fuehrer, were the judges' seats. The court comprised five people, the President, two S.S. officials, a representative of the Wehrmacht and one of the police. There were no lawyers and no public. I do not think the accused was present either, for, although I looked in every direction, very cautiously of course, I could catch no glimpse of the well-known face of the comedian. I was escorted by a boorish usher to a little bench which looked like a confessional immediately facing the President's chair. In a stentorian voice the president made me repeat twice over all details about myself, laying particular emphasis on my role as President of the Union. The questioning did not last long, as I had nothing to tell. I was completely ignorant of the fact that Fink used to write for the foreign press; I was even unaware that he had ever displayed any journalistic activity.

"But if you still maintain that you know nothing about this case," came the President's final stupid and pedantic question, "are you aware, in your capacity as a journalist, that Fink is able actually to succeed in having these articles delivered to foreign newspapers which make persistent attacks on the Nazi regime?" I might have replied that they had the censorship, and consequently a better means of making the necessary enquiries, but I merely shook my head to show that I knew nothing about the matter whatever. As I left the People's Tribunal that morning I no longer had any doubt that these summary and inconclusive judicial proceedings were just face-saving histrionics to give the world the impression that justice still held sway in Nazi

Germany, whereas in reality verdicts were already passed and decisions arrived at before the little "show" started.

As I have said, this was Chamberlain's special summer. In international, diplomatic, and journalistic circles in Berlin people talked about the short-sightedness of the British premier, who could not foresee that Hitler, after his invasion of Austria and the Sudeten incident, would be certain to extend his dominions still further, or that by doing so he would also place England in a position of irreparable isolation. Chamberlain was accused of not having realized that the Anti-Comintern Pact, which had been concluded between France and Japan on the initiative of Hitler, was in reality more a revolt against Great Britain than against Bolshevik Russia. Everyone was astonished that he refused to believe in the existence of the powerful armaments organized secretly by Hitler. Apropos of this, the industrial plant of Fallersleben, which had been placed under the control of Marshal Goering and had been known as the Hermann Goering Works, was undisguisedly working on armaments.

The head of the Labor Front, Dr. Ley, was constantly getting new ships laid down. Ostensibly they were intended for cruises for workers, but they were primarily designed for the defense of Germany when the day came. On some of the Berlin roofs began to appear the long barrels of German anti-aircraft guns pointing skywards. All this was a clear proof of a state of tension and of a supreme effort to be ready for war.

But Chamberlain was not the only short-sighted statesman. All the European Governments were equally short-sighted, inasmuch, as they failed to observe such a swift and large-scale re-armament on the part of Germany. Many of them looked upon the whole business as mere bluff, and

thought that Hitler would pull up short at the threshold of war. Poor old Chamberlain made a supreme effort and went to Bad Godesberg for a final desperate endeavor to avert war.

In the annals of journalism the two days at Bad Godesberg will be recorded as the most anxious and most unreal in history; for forty-eight hours we were kept busy at the merest random guesswork, at our wits' end to form the faintest idea of what was actually happening. There we were, for forty-eight hours, sitting in front of the two telephones allotted to us, which were guarded by the S.S. We, who were nearly two hundred in number, had been virtually quarantined in a hotel that was crowded with a host of idle people whose presence there was utterly needless.

Hitler had gone to Bad Godesberg not to listen to exhortations, but to reaffirm his irrevocable decision. The Sudeten area was to be annexed on October the first, come what might; that was to say, after the expiration of eight days. He, the Fuehrer, would listen to no warning about the embarrassment which his arbitrary act would occasion to the Powers. The Powers should learn once for all, what Berlin's word meant, when Berlin had come to a decision. The Conference had, therefore, been futile, our journey had been futile, the political excitement which we all had undergone had been futile and superfluous, and there was absolutely no use in our hanging about any longer in front of a telephone, in the hope of being able to send out big news to the world. Again and again I asked myself, especially after Bad Godesberg, if our feverish energy as special correspondents was not sometimes out of all proportion to the news we got and its reaction on the public. The public, after all, was not waiting to form its judgment on the information we supplied. At Bad Godesberg, with

the help of a little psychological acumen and a knowledge of politics, we could have jotted down within an hour of our arrival conclusive and final information about the conference, because nothing could transpire to alter it.

That night, after the news of the meeting was released, Dietrich, the head of the Reich Press Bureau, who was in his pyjamas, received me in his room in the Dreisen Hotel as he was preparing to go to bed. He looked supremely satisfied, and said that what he was telling me would be the first authentic account of the conversations, exclusively for my paper. The words which Dietrich used, as well as I can recall, were, "The Fuehrer has done for Chamberlain. We shall march into the Sudeten area in a few days. London and Paris will see!" He poked fun at the poor British Premier, who had been fighting for peace and justice. My heart beat quicker, however, when I saw that half of what the head of the Nazi Press Bureau had told me had already appeared in the *Popolo d'Italia*. This showed that they were beginning to be just a little uneasy in Italy.

I know for a fact that Mussolini, after the telephone message which he received from Chamberlain almost immediately after his return to London, sent for Ciano, and was obviously agitated over the turn things were taking. Chamberlain had drawn a very gloomy picture of the situation. The Sudeten question would certainly be no laughing matter. As for Czechoslovakia, she would fight most courageously for her own rights. On the other hand, they must not forget that France was bound to Prague by very definite pledges. London, on its side, had no intention of permitting the triumph of Nazi brute force and despotism. All that could be done was that he, Mussolini, taking advantage of his personal good relations with Hitler, should try to persuade him not to commit an act of folly. The way out which the Duce found was to propose a last minute conference of

four at Munich, but it took all his skill to gain Hitler's acquiescence, after prolonged telephone talks between Rome and Berchtesgaden. The proposal was at last accepted "in order to please you, Mussolini."

The one thing that remained indelibly engraved on my mind with regard to the Conference at Munich was the pathetic condition of the poor representative of Czechoslovakia, who every now and then would make despairing appeals over the phone to Leger, the General Secretary of the Quai d'Orsay and to the Fuehrerhaus, where the Conference was held. The unhappy man was not allowed even to come near the hall—to say nothing of entering while the fate of his country was being discussed.

The Conference consisted of the four big leaders, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier, but the last three were there merely to take notice of the irrevocable decision of the first. From every point of view the Conference was a melancholy farce. A whole morning and an afternoon were spent in useless discussion about a helpless victim who had already been condemned. The only issue involved was how to legalize the sentence and settle the formalities of the execution. On the first day the valley of the Sudeten area was doomed, on the second day another sector—on the third day—and so on—the annexation to start on the first of October. I was in the hall adjoining the one in which the four heads of Governments with their Ministers for Foreign Affairs were assembled in earnest discussion. From time to time Galeazzo Ciano would sally out from the hall to smoke a cigarette with us, but it seemed to us that the business which had brought him to Munich was of very little interest to him, he appeared to consider it a waste of time to talk about it. As he casually remarked, "The whole thing had been settled some time back." How can I describe the irate expression on the faces of Keitel, Schmitt and

Goering, the master of ceremonies, when they saw that, in defiance of all instructions, we had dared to talk in the very ante-chamber of the conference hall. When the Conference came to an end late in the afternoon, and the folding doors of the meeting-room opened for the exit of a silent Chamberlain, a gloomy and frowning Daladier, and a Leger and Wilson yearning to breathe freely in the fresh air, I could not refrain from casting a glance at the actual stage of the Conference. There I saw Mussolini, beaming all over as he sat alongside Hitler, who was looking quite sure of his ground. They both stooped to examine a big map of Czechoslovakia which was spread out on the table, and exchanged remarks, I surmised, about the route of the march into Sudeten region. Mussolini looked as though he were studying every possible means of pleasing Hitler. At that very same moment the telephone was conveying to the whole world—and simultaneously to the anxious Prague Cabinet—the decision which had been made at Munich that a systematic occupation of the Sudeten area should start on October 1st.

But what about Mussolini and the other actors in the farce? Although that conference had been the outcome of his own special initiative, Mussolini had gone to Munich, with a definite foreknowledge that it would end as it did. He had been actuated in making the proposal for the Conference solely by the determination to use it as an excellent opportunity for increasing his own popularity in Germany. In fact, he made a triumphal entry into the Bavarian capital with the cordial approval of Hitler, whose ends were served by that pompous gesture. He was escorted through be-flagged streets and avenues, amid frenzied acclamations from balconies and windows, and from the serried ranks of the crowds that swirled around him. It looked almost as though the demonstrations had been specially pre-arranged

for his benefit. Merely from the spectacular point of view, at any rate, it is interesting to note the difference between the welcome given to him and that accorded to the other heads of foreign Governments. The representatives of the Italian press most decidedly profited by the Duce's popularity, as a result of which they succeeded in doing anything they wanted that day, passing through military posts, breaking regulations, moving freely among those in authority, and finally, taking by assault, alone among the journalists, the very Fuehrerhaus in which the Conference was held.

Chamberlain displayed his innate affability to the extent of saluting with uplifted hand the company of soldiers lined up in his honor at the airport of Oberwiesenfeld. Before leaving Munich on the following morning by plane he paid a final visit to Hitler at his private house and brought away with him from that morning visit, so it has been stated, an extra "scrap of paper," which in reality turned out to be a new and unexpected gift to the Fuehrer. Great Britain and Germany by that "scrap of paper" promised to live on terms of mutual peace, and, in the concluding words of the document: "to continue their efforts to remove any possible grounds for divergence." But what guarantee did Great Britain get that Hitler would not continue to seize territories which did not belong to Germany?

With regard to the attitude of official Fascist circles, it is said that they did not care a jot if Central Europe, having been turned topsy-turvy, should drop finally into the capacious bag of Nazi Germany. During many long years Central Europe was visualized by Rome as just a sort of ethnical mosaic, and it was taken for granted that sooner or later a new reshuffling of its constituent states would be bound to come. For all that, before 1938 Mussolini's Italy would never have accepted a solution of the Central European

problem according to the German conception—in fact it would have accepted anything but that. Now, however, a rapprochement between Rome and Berlin had been effected, and an Axis pact was on the eve of making Mussolini an accomplice instead of an opponent of Hitler. In all their successive meetings up to May, 1939, when the Axis became an accomplished fact, the two dictators came to an agreement on the broad lines that Germany should have Central and Eastern Europe, while Italy should control the Mediterranean and Africa. It was presumed, furthermore, that the two parties had come to an agreement as to their mutual co-operation in the international field.

Mussolini's initiative in calling the Munich Conference consequently was just a face-saving gesture. At the Palazzo Chigi they confined themselves merely to recording the change of the German-Czech frontier. Having duly registered in the archives of their Public Record Office this realignment, Roman officialdom resumed the task of moulding that complex pact which was to be called the Axis. It is stated that Mussolini was anxious to restore the political philosophy of Machiavelli; I do not think, however, that his conception of statesmanship was really Machiavellian. I am convinced that he felt that he could thrive politically only by adopting a policy based on supporting, in an ever-increasingly servile manner, the great wrecker of the European continent whom he had once described as "lacking in a realism." After the sacrifice of Austria, what other sacrifice would not have been possible? From that moment Mussolini ceased to be a man with a soul and a European consciousness; he placed himself on the same level as Tiso of Slovakia, who, even though possessing the authority and dignity of the head of a nominally independent state, was accustomed to go to the capital of the Reich to receive orders.

I was obliged to be present at the so-called gradual occupation of the Sudeten area, at least in its initial phase when two German Alpine divisions were entering the Eger territory. Goebbels had made a very shrewd calculation about producing effects on us foreign journalists, so it happened that all of us, organized by the Minister of Propaganda and placed under the guidance of German functionaries and officials, arrived at certain points just in time to be present at the approach of the troops. I recall the first halt on a winding road leading to a village hidden in the woods. There were signposts already studded along our route, with German inscriptions suggestive of a training terrain during manœuvres; and around these posts were gathered groups of peasants with ox-carts and other vehicles, the oxen with their horns festively wreathed with flowers. The division of the Wehrmacht marched in the middle of the road as though on a route-march. The motorcyclists headed the column. The commanding officers were riding horses. There were no complete divisions, but only half divisions. Their forces, all told, so I have been informed, would not have been adequate if the Czechs had offered resistance. But how could Prague think of resistance, when they observed that not one of the Great Powers was ready to put up even a moral defense of Czech rights? It was, however, at once a symptom and a test of the state of affairs that the Germans were marching with such confidence, as though they knew they would not be opposed.

The Fuehrer made his entry into the Sudeten area on the second day of its occupation, accompanied by a veritable legion of henchmen, including all the highest officials in the state. The little town of Eger was the first to witness this strange invasion. They had strewn the road with flowers because at the last moment it was prohibited to throw bouquets or flowers from windows or the street; there might

be a bomb among them! What unbounded arrogance there was in that first address by Hitler to the Sudeten Germans, in the little central square of Eger in front of a huge baroque fountain which had to suspend for an hour the eternal rhythmic tinkle of its jet of water! His voice trembled with exultation. In a corner of the square on the extreme verge of the crowd, a local band gave two cacophonous performances of military marches in most unmilitary tempo, oblivious of the fact that the din drowned the voice of the dictator who had not yet finished speaking. When I close my eyes I can still see the array of uniforms behind Hitler, brown, black, and greenish-grey uniforms, the bright red tabs on the collars of the generals, the inevitable display of organized force which has been characteristic of all phases of German imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler, recalling unforgettable old photographs of general staffs surrounding the Kaiser, the long cloaks with double rows of buttons, the spiked helmets, the red tabs, the fierce moustaches which I have always associated since my childhood with the picture of a stubborn, proud Germany—a Germany utterly indifferent to human rights.

The following spring Hitler took a brief rest. The treacherous blow against the rest of Czechoslovakia was prepared and struck in silence, without too much drum-beating. In the course of one night Czechoslovakia vanished from the map of Europe. Not even then did the chancelleries of the Great Powers make any protest, and Europe accepted with resignation the new amputation of her exhausted and outraged body.

In January, Chamberlain and Halifax paid a visit to Rome—a visit that has not been chronicled because it was futile. Perhaps it only served to convince British statesmen that they could no longer count on the Duce. The Duce ambled behind Hitler like Sancho Panza behind Don

Quixote, and Ciano ambled behind the Duce, aping his postures and gestures. They say that Mussolini assumed an air of treating the presence of the British statesmen in Rome as a matter of only secondary importance, and that on certain occasions he even lowered himself to being rude. In compliance with orders from headquarters the Fascist press gave little space to reports of the visit, and its comments were curt. Gayda stated that England failed to realize at the proper time the necessity for a revision of the map of Europe. A hint had been given, too, by Berlin that the speech delivered by Chamberlain in the House of Commons on the necessity for new British armaments deserved severe censure. The *Boersen Zeitung*, organ of the Wilhelmstrasse, which six months previously had extolled Chamberlain to the skies for his give-and-take disposition, now attacked him with all the bitterness of which the editor, Megerle, was capable. What was the idea of this resumption of the manufacture of armaments on the part of Great Britain, the paper asked? Had anything perchance happened in Europe to justify such an extreme decision? Had not all the acts done by Germany up to that moment been in conformity with international law and ethics? What had Germany done to arouse such a state of alarm among the English Conservative lords? And so on, and so on, with that Olympian conceit and petulance that is a special gift of German political criticism. When Germany asserts that she is a victim, we must take her absolutely at her word, and, if possible, make an act of contrition. When others are, however, obliged to make any protest for the maintenance of their rights, Germany is ready to ask with an air of innocent amazement: "Warum so eine Aufregung?" (Why so much excitement?)



## V. THE FEAR OF COURAGE

ALL THIS TIME THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, BERNARDO AT-tolico, had been resting on his triumphs. The forces making for a policy of close agreement between the Governments of Rome and Berlin had succeeded. Their crowning achievement was attained when, at Milan in May, 1938, Ribbentrop and Ciano affixed their signatures to the decisive agreement which was baptized with the pompous title of "Pact of Steel." Made of steel from that moment, in German terminology, were not only the pacts but also the ramparts erected by Hitler along the frontiers, in order to be able under their protection to carry out at his leisure those deeds of rapine at the expense of the small states. Used in the physical sense, the term was applied to the defense built on the French frontier, known as the West Wall.

In the Spring of that last year of peace Hitler gave us an exhibition of his brilliant talent for working up the atmosphere to a degree of tension from which war was bound to come as a matter of uneluctable necessity. On April 28 President Roosevelt, who from the other continent had followed with anxiety the turmoil which was getting worse and worse in Europe, wrote to Hitler requesting him in the most courteous terms to give at least a promise not to at-

tack "the remaining nations in Europe that were still free." Could Hitler possibly be surprised at this gesture on the part of America, when he reflected that in less than a year, without even firing a shot, Germany had occupied Austria, the Sudeten area, and finally Bohemia and Moravia—all that remained of Czechoslovakia? The Reich had risen from a population of 65,000,000 subjects to 100,000,000. In addition to raping Czechoslovakia and Austria it had confiscated the chief center of war industries—the Skoda works. Hardly had one region been occupied and annexed, when from it the Nazi Party stretched out its tentacles towards further loot. The systematic persecution of Jews and Communists was forthwith put in force on the very first day in the occupied regions. If they kept up that progressive rate of confiscation and persecution, what would be the condition of the rest of Europe?

Hitler replied to Roosevelt with a lying and insulting irony. He declared that he had "asked" all those nations which Roosevelt thought were at the mercy of German threats whether they actually considered that they were in danger, and that he had received a "negative" reply from each state in turn. Poland, of course, was not and could not be asked a similar question, because Poland would have given a very haughty reply. "I have not been able to put the question to States like Syria and Palestine," added the Fuehrer, to the intense amusement of his Nazi entourage, "because just at the moment those nations do not enjoy complete independence." I have heard a common gangster in the dock cross-examine his own judges with the same effrontery to show his cleverness.

The irony of the position was, that while carrying on these diplomatic interchanges Hitler went ahead with the scrapping of treaties which Germany had signed in the past, denouncing, without further ado, the naval agreement with

Great Britain and the pact of non-aggression which had been made with Poland. Only two years previously he had boasted about those treaties, affirming that inasmuch as Germany could not claim that she had yet become fully armed, the conclusions of such bilateral pacts was tantamount to a guarantee that the Reich intended to do its share towards the establishment of reciprocal and constructive confidence in Europe. Hitler next put forward Germany's new claim, which comprised the return of Danzig to the Reich and the creation of a corridor within the Polish corridor in the form of a narrow tongue of land, in the middle of which there would be a motor-road and a railway, to link East Prussia with Germany.

The wonderful success of Hitler's acts of brigandage, entailing no really serious consequences for himself, was too much for Mussolini, and so it was that he fell upon Albania.

It is a pretty little story, well worth retelling. Albania was ruled by King Zog, whom the Fascist Government had considered the most suitable among the Albanian chiefs to assume the crown of Scanderbeg. Along with its protection the Fascist Government assured him some tangible advantages—things which count. But Zog had begun to act more and more independently, and had become increasingly disobedient to Rome's wishes. The Minister at Tirana was a diplomat whose wife, the daughter of General Cavaliero, the Under-Secretary of War, was, according to popular rumor, conferring her favours on Galeazzo Ciano. The man who had hitherto given orders to King Zog, and had paid him on behalf of Rome, was this same minister Jacomini who, in addition to being bound by these ties of, shall we say, friendship to Ciano, was privy to his plans concerning the future of Albania. It was decided to depose Zog, and annex Albania to the Kingdom of Italy. These were the days when Ciano had only to express a wish in which Mus-

solini saw some opportunity for enhancing his own glory and prestige, and that wish was granted without hesitation.

On April 7 the Italian troops entered Tirana. Zog fled abroad. Albania was incorporated in Italy, and its crown assumed by Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy and Emperor of Abyssinia. Ciano's ambition to be made Viceroy of Albania was frustrated, for what reason it is not clear. Perhaps Mussolini began to be jealous of the growing influence which his son-in-law was acquiring. At any rate, the post of Viceroy was not created, but Jacomini was promoted from Minister to Governor. The Cianos, father and son, and all the rest of the family, did not go empty-handed, however, for they could depend upon forty per cent of the shares of the Aipa (Azienda Italiana Petroli Albanesi). The remaining sixty per cent having been entrusted to the control of the Italian Ministry of Communications, of which Ciano Senior was the head, was in fact theirs also.

The Romans looked at one another and smiled. The nation was as sublimely indifferent to this adventure, as it had been to the others that had preceded it, including the conquest of Abyssinia. The only person to make the customary and suitable noises intended to glorify the extension of the Empire was Virginio Gayda, in accordance with instructions given to him. In the columns of the *Giornale d'Italia* the words "imperial," "Roman," "constructive" and "New European Order," appeared in big type. A telegram with Hitler's congratulations gave great satisfaction at the Palazzo Venezia, where it had been expected.

When the first hint was given by Berlin of the difficulties in which Germany was placed in the sphere of agricultural labor, because work in the armament factories had absorbed the greater part of the available man-power in Germany, Italy, without losing time, offered a first contingent of her workers, followed by a second and a third con-

tingent, until they ran into some hundreds of thousands of men engaged as agricultural laborers in Germany. The anger which this arrangement stirred in the hearts of many sober-minded Italians could not be expressed in words. These workers were torn away from their national collectivity to go and live as slaves, God knows for how many years, on the soil of Germany, and to be completely absorbed by her. It looked like a mass deportation, which was both degrading and humiliating, at a moment when Italy herself actually had a greater need for that man-power for her own defensive preparations. To me it looked like the suicide of the nation. Others regarded it as a further triumph for the Fascist regime.

Knowing Germany and its brutal powers of assimilation, and knowing that the Nazi policy made racism total and radical in the sense that it would not permit the use and development of other ethnical groups and other races alongside its own race which it considered the chosen one, the sending of these workers north of the Brenner savored to me of a renunciation, of servility and slavery. I would rather that they had gone to Abyssinia than to the Germany of Hitler, Rosenberg and Goebbels. Even from the economic point of view, it was a fatal error. To ensure that the transplantation was a success, the Fascist authorities even set up special offices in Berlin for the purpose of looking after the organization of Italian labor in Germany. Such was the sorry plight to which the brand of corporate economic life which Mussolini had created, to give an orderly system and discipline to the development of labor and productivity in Italy, was reduced. But I believe that at the time Mussolini's thoughts were centered solely on the Axis, and that he had completely forgotten all about the Corporate System.

A fleeting glimpse of Italian life during those months

would suffice to show what tremendous mistakes the Fascist Government was making, under the false impression that to support and imitate Germany would be of advantage to Italy. It was impossible to take the express from Rome to Berlin without meeting Italian commissions of all kinds, going to Germany for the sole purpose of establishing a co-ordination of labor. These commissions, consisting of senators and deputies, frequently accompanied by ministers, were adapting themselves to German desires, and the word "levelling" seems to me the simplest translation of "Gleichschaltung," which means, in addition to other significations, "to be joined together" or "absorbed." We lost something of our national independence with every trip made by a commission to Berlin. Italian economics abdicated their rightful role in deference to the demands of German economics, which claimed that they had to support the more serious and heavy burden of the Axis. This Axis, with its implication of a linking together, presupposes two points, the points of departure and arrival respectively—two poles. In reality, however, it was reduced to just one pole, the capital of the Reich.

There never was seen such an influx of German tourists into Italy as during that summer. The very low rate of exchange for the lira allowed even the most economical German to travel through the Brenner into the Italian cities, which in those days were provided with every convenience and exhibited a limitless variety of entertainment and luxuries. Venice in particular suffered from a glut of Germans; they were merely birds of passage in Milan, though they literally robbed its shops; in Rome they loafed between the Forum and the restaurants, to take photographs in the first place, otherwise in quest of good Fracati wine.

After the usual annual meeting of the alliance of the news agencies, which on this occasion was held at Calo, I

came to Italy for my month's holiday. A letter from Morgagni reached me at Milan. He said that he simply must speak to me as soon as possible on a very serious and important matter. We made an appointment to meet at Bologna station. Morgagni, who had just alighted from the Rome train, came towards me with more than his usual effusiveness, and looking rather disconcerted, he gripped my arm firmly with the paternal solicitude one shows for a friend who has met with a stroke of misfortune. He told me that the German Government had asked that I should be recalled, and added that the head office at Rome felt obliged to accede to the request.

I was not, however, to be upset, he urged, as I would be sent from Berlin to London, where I would represent both the Stefani Agency and the *Popolo d'Italia*. "Take a rest for two months in your beloved Capri," he said, "and get yourself fit for your new appointment." I could not understand why he should show such commiseration for me. I was to be changed to London! It was more than I would have dared to wish for.

I reached Capri full of elation at the splendid news, which I communicated at once to my wife. Day followed day during which I revelled in carefree, dreamy indolence with my dear friends, my wife and my son. Then, on the eighth day, a telegram from Giorgio Pini, of the *Popolo d'Italia*, rudely awoke me from my day-dream. The telegram, which came from Milan, ran, "I am glad to tell you that your recall from Berlin has been countermanded. Carry on as before. Best wishes." That meant Berlin once more and good-by to all hopes of getting to London.

The political situation numbed me once more with its dreary outlook. I had a grim foreboding of war. I had left Berlin with the definite premonition of an imminent out-

break, but I had shut my eyes to the hideous vision in Capri. I had forgotten the German claims and threats against Poland—a Poland that would neither be an Austria nor a Czechoslovakia, but would fight. I had forgotten about Great Britain sloughing her passive attitude of the past. I had forgotten about Hitler, who had just reached the peak of his paroxysm of frenzy, and was now determined on a clash of arms. I had forgotten about Italy trailing closely behind Germany all the time, like an oriental slave chained to the triumphal chariot of a haughty conqueror. I had forgotten the A.A. guns on the roofs of Berlin, and the German Luftwaffe in a state of perpetual mobilization. It was enough to drive one mad. What a fate was brooding over martyred Europe, which from Versailles right up to the present had never had real peace! And what about Italy, whose fate was in the hands of another lunatic no less dangerous than the lunatic of the Wilhelmstrasse?

This time I did not take my family back to Berlin with me as I had done in the past; I left them in Capri, because the air of Germany reeked with gunpowder. I foresaw what was impending. Before autumn was over, we should be plunged in the great conflict. It seemed to me that my own position after that recall—which was not unexpected—and after the countermanding of that recall, the reason for which I could not guess, was exceedingly precarious. There in our little cottage, looking out on the sea, amid our flowering oleanders, my boy would be able to live in blessed peace and know nothing of the actual difficulties of war, with the inevitable restrictions, the eternal uncertainties and the risk of having to snatch up in a hurry a few of the most indispensable things and fly.

On my return to Berlin from Naples I had to pass through Rome. I must say that I never liked staying at Rome, for it was one of those cities that had arrived at such

a peak of saturation, and over which Fascism had spread such a false atmosphere of formalism, that one preferred to steer clear of the place. In the course of a very few years, with all the ministries, centers of confederations, public institutes, quarters for administrative councils and newspaper offices, Rome underwent a phenomenal increase in population, rising from one million to about two and a half millions. There was always a feeling, however, that this was all merely provisional and largely lacking in solidity. The official summoned to the capital to take up a new post in a newly-created office, knew beforehand that his job would not last long, for in Fascism the situation is constantly changing. Men were transferred from one department to another, and ministers came and went, followed in their pilgrimages by their own cliques of favorites and toadies. Careerists who came from the provinces to make good in Rome, and feeling uncertain about the future, gathered around them backers and favorites. They worked hard to attain a key position, with possibilities of bettering themselves and piling up their savings. Rome had become just a bazaar of jobs, wire-pullings and vanities. The winged figure rising from the roof of the Palace of Justice, a symbol of dignity, righteousness and labor, wore an expression of gloom when she looked down on this feverish display of pomp and luxury, on all this negation of the consciousness of responsibilities and of genuine collective inspiration. One heard on the lips of the Fascists nothing but commonplaces and pompous phrases, as though each one of them had been taught a formal political catechism with a special terminology that was compulsory.

Seventy per cent of the jobs in the ministries were completely superfluous. The heads of these departments turned up at their offices a few hours before noon, and put in an appearance again later on in the evening a little before clos-

ing time, when secretaries placed documents before them for signature. But the elegant wives of these hierarchs of the ministries were waiting outside in the street in their streamlined cars, for their husbands to take them to dine in expensive fashionable restaurants, and afterwards to the baccarat tables, where they played for high stakes, or to theatrical and film premières. There were also the literary taverns where the political man and his wife had to put in an appearance now and then because it was the thing to do. In these taverns there was a mixed grill of celebrities and semi-celebrities, the serious writer, the comic writer, the diffident beginner, the politician and his wife, the artist most in vogue, the artist's wife, the artist's lover, the enigmatical being with a foreign accent, the race-course habitué, the inevitable friend, and the near or distant relative of Ciano. "Cianismo" was an infection which had affected a great many.

In the hotel I ran into a woman of Russian birth, whom I had formerly known in Berlin, the divorced wife of a certain film-producer. We had lunch in the bar of the Excelsior. At a prearranged moment, she got the telephone passed on to her from its table, and in my presence and that of all the guests, started in atrocious Italian an endless and extremely fatuous conversation. When she gathered that we had had quite enough of it, she put down the receiver, and "by the way" opened her purse, and handed me with a great air of mystery, a telegram which she had received. To be exact, she only showed me the signature, "Galeazzo Ciano," but the coquettish expression that accompanied the gesture told me the rest. "He is expecting me, you know. I cannot keep him waiting long," she confided to me during dessert, and then departed in great haste. But I feel certain that she showed that telegram to everyone of her acquaintance.

Mussolini, too, had a kept mistress and the whole capital was talking about it. In addition to being pretty, Claretta Petacci was apparently a lady of boundless energy and ability. Under her influence the Duce somewhat modified his Spartan way of living. There were people who asserted that they had seen him frequently at a certain hour when, after leaving the Villa Torlonia, his chin bent over the handle-bars of his motorcycle, he flew to some rendezvous where his meetings with Claretta took place. Her sister got an opening with a film company under the stage name of Miriam di San Servolo. Her father wrote articles on the practice of medicine every week in the *Messaggero*.

When I was received at the Ministry of Popular Culture by Luciano, who was head of that department, and likewise a "Cianist," I could not refrain from asking him what was the meaning of my first recall from Berlin at the instigation of the German Government, and the subsequent cancelling of that recall. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Go and ask Attolico. He is the only one who can possibly know anything about it. Here, I can swear to you, not even the Duce is aware of the reasons put forward by the German Government when they asked for your recall from Berlin." There was nothing astonishing in this reply. Everything was on those lines. Berlin dictated and Rome carried out Berlin's dictates, without asking for any explanations. The ministry that dealt with such matters did not know the reason for an Italian journalist losing favor with the German authorities, and did not take the trouble to enquire.

In the Fascist capital of course they were unaware of the fact that a war was at their very doors. I do not hesitate to assert that Mussolini's Rome, owing to the faithlessness of diplomats and the ignorance of rulers, was always the last to learn of the changes that had taken place. Few Italian diplomats had the courage to state what they did know, and

no member of the Government or of the Party wanted to remove his rose-colored glasses from his eyes in order to look realities in the face. I don't know what was the use of our press reports beyond drawing the attention of the Government in office to a sense of realities. Many of them were censored, but portions of them were published, perhaps merely as curiosities or for the recording of contemporary events. But with regard to the serious threats made by Germany to Poland, and Poland's firm determination to defend herself, nobody in Rome knew anything or even wished to discuss the subject. All they knew was that everything Berlin did was necessarily right. This blind confidence of Roman officialdom in Hitler's policy had assumed such proportions that the Germans themselves were amazed at it and naturally tried to take every possible advantage of it.

An incident occurred which to many will appear incredible. An official from Goebbel's department went to Rome to make a proposal to the Duce in accordance with which budding Fascist journalists were to be sent to Germany, where the German Ministry of Propaganda would take charge of them. These youths would get a professional training in the Reich and have facilities for studying the problems of German life and of National Socialism with a view to their becoming an "aristocracy" of the Italian press. Goebbels guaranteed every material assistance to these budding journalists, and even offered to remunerate them with salaries equivalent to those received by Nazi journalists. Had it not been for this last clause, the humiliating character of which did not elude the comprehension even of the most callow of Italians, I believe that Mussolini would have given his consent to the proposal. Instead, a compromise was reached, and actually only a small group of cub-reporters, who were "free from prejudices," set out for Germany

to bring joy to Herr Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, who was dreaming of one school of journalism, and one press covering the whole continent from the Baltic to Sicily.

In Berlin Attolico tried to explain to me the measures that had been adopted against me and the reason for their subsequent withdrawal. I had made myself obnoxious to two German Ministries, the Ministry of Propaganda and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—especially to the latter—because I held views that were notoriously hostile to Nazism. It was Schmidt, head of the Foreign Press Office, who had demanded my recall, as he had noticed my indifference to his lectures in the afternoon sessions of the Press Conference. My articles, he said, reeked of cunningly veiled rancor. Furthermore, some statements of mine, statements that were imprudent, had been reported to the Wilhelmstrasse. The request for my recall had been countermaned only provisionally, because I was president of the Foreign Press Union, and because it would not be pleasing to Nazi officialdom if, with my departure, the post of president should be assumed by the vice-president, Count Dembinsky, who belonged to the official Polish agency. Now the whole thing dawned on me. The Government of Berlin, which was on the point of making an attack on Poland, would have found itself in an awkward position with an organization of the international press in Berlin actually placed under the control of a Polish journalist, and, an energetic and brilliant journalist such as Dembinsky. After all, I represented in their eyes “das kleinere Übel,” and I would have to deal personally with an embarrassing situation.

I asked myself who could have told Schmidt about my views on Hitler and Germany. Our association could not be called a perfect blend of kindred and congenial souls. First of all there were my Italian colleagues, some of whom were

fawningly subservient of the type of Schmidt and Boehmer, and I even suspected that one of them was paid by the German Government to spy on us. Among the others there were three or four of dubious nationality and origin, who struck me as being on the most cordial terms with the officials of the Ministry of Propaganda and of Nazism.

Under these conditions I decided to send in my resignation at the first meeting of the Union, and in the meantime to take no part in its proceedings. Then matters swiftly came to a head. Hitler showed his determination to get Danzig back and link up Germany and East Prussia, which had been separated by the Polish corridor. The Government of Warsaw mobilized and began to take military precautions, while Beck in London asked for an Anglo-Polish pact of mutual assistance. Poland was absolutely convinced that not only could she withstand Germany, but that she would emerge victorious from war if it had to come. It is incomprehensible how the rulers of Poland could have been the victims of such blindness. In Warsaw they spoke quite openly of the possibility of the Polish cavalry parading victoriously at no far distant date under the Brandenburg Gate. The Polish General Staff maintained that the German armaments did not by a long way come up to the impression generally held about them. "You should see our cavalry!" was the proud comment made to me by an official who went as a courier from the office of the Polish military attaché. Yet Lipski, the Ambassador, struck me as an intelligent man who was in a position that should have enabled him to get precise information. For a long time he had been a regular guest of Goebbels, and Lipski invariably turned up at every Nazi demonstration.

There is a psychological preliminary to the genesis of all wars. Perhaps Hitler imagined that he could overcome with mere threats the proud defiance with which Warsaw coun-

tered his challenge. Warsaw based its plans on the belief that Hitler was bluffing. Great Britain and France hoped that, should war break out, Poland would be able to hold out for six months at least. All Europe was convinced that it was facing one of the periodical storms which Hitler had by that time got into the habit of letting loose, without necessarily making an open declaration of war.

I noticed that during this period it was only the capitals of the little states, which looked on, trembling with terror like babes witnessing the quarrellings of their elders, that were able to gauge the actual barometrical pressure of the international situation. In Belgrade, Bucharest, Athens, Brussels, and The Hague nothing that happened or was imminent escaped the notice of the authorities. The newspapers of these countries registered the process of congestion that was developing in the veins of sick Europe. At length the moment came when they all saw that there was no way out of the impasse, and that the inevitable was on the point of coming true.

They telephoned to me from Milan to start at once for Salzburg. On the journey to Munich I was accompanied by our consul-general, Pittalis, who was going to Salzburg for the meeting between Ciano and Ribbentrop. This meeting, on the eve of a war that was now considered in all quarters to be inevitable, aroused our curiosity. We landed at the Oesterreicher Hof. Ciano had not turned up so far, but Ribbentrop had gone to the station to welcome him as usual. When Ciano entered the foyer of the hotel, accompanied by two officials from his department, by Attolico and Magistrati, and, last but not least, by Ansaldo, his friend and echo. I noticed that he looked gloomy. Ciano and Ribbontrop immediately began a conference, first alone, and later on with Attolico. Attolico's stay was short, however, and presently he dashed breathlessly downstairs

and gave some orders to Magistrati. The hotel switchboard operator got instructions to keep the line with Rome open day and night.

I took Ansaldo aside and began to review recent events with him. He was impatient to hear how matters stood in Berlin in the conflict with Poland, while I was equally anxious to know what business had brought Ciano at that moment so unexpectedly to Salzburg.

"Oh, you know," he replied, "at Rome they are just beginning to realize that things are becoming very serious. Mussolini was at Forli when he received a communication that war is considered in London to be inevitable. Henderson, it seems, has been instructed to tell Hitler that England considers it her duty to honor her pledges to Poland. Everything will go on smoothly enough until the territories are actually annexed, but should this lead to a clash of arms, the situation will change."

"Do you believe that we shall be involved in the war too?"

"That idea must be absolutely ruled out. Get involved in the war—with what? With guns that are fit only for a museum?"

"So it would seem that Ciano has come just to state that Italy is in no position to give help to Germany. Is that true?"

"Well, what other business brought him here, do you think? He and I talked about it at great length in the train on our way here. Can't Hitler be satisfied for the present with what he has seized already?"

I breathed freely. Italy would not go to war. The talks between the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs continued until dark. It was stated afterwards that Ciano went on to Obersalzberg to confer with the Fuehrer. That evening, however, the Fascist minister had a long telephonic conver-

sation with the Duce. I learned later on, by reading a report of the proceedings, what transpired between them. The conversation began with words something like this, "It is impossible to discuss matters with this fellow Ribbentrop!"

Ciano had opened the conversation by informing the German minister, in Mussolini's name, that the Italian Government was not contemplating leading their country into war, on account of its inadequate military preparation. The Italian Government asked whether it was absolutely indispensable and inevitable for Germany to start a war just at that moment. Later on, perhaps within the next three years but certainly not before 1942, Italy would be in a position to carry out her pledges as an ally, and would take her place at the side of the Reich. On the other hand, the Italian Government could not conceal its own uneasiness about the risk that the war, which in this instance would have been started by Germany, might prove a long one, and might spread at an alarming rate owing to the attitude of the Western Powers who had made up their minds to support Poland. Had the German Government taken those eventualities into their calculations? What were the precautions taken by them?

The story of this meeting, over which a veil of secrecy has to a very large extent been cast, indicates that Ribbentrop just shrugged his shoulders, and looking with a half-sneering expression at Ciano, exclaimed that the Berlin Government was only too well aware of the military unpreparedness of Italy. The German Government in coming to its decision with regard to the Polish crisis, had not banked for even one minute on Italian support of Germany in the action which had been organized by her to force Poland to yield to the German claims. The war with Poland, Ribbentrop added, would be finished in a very few weeks. The Fuehrer had adopted all the measures that were necessary for the success

of the campaign and (here Ribbentrop struck a haughty attitude as he indulged in pompous language which did not admit of a reply), "When the Fuehrer declares a war, that war can only end in a victory for him." As for the rest, Ribbentrop hailed the opportunity of informing the representative of the Fascist Government that actually at that moment the negotiations had been completed for the conclusion of a pact with Russia which would be signed on the following day. This pact stipulated a mutual close co-operation between Berlin and Moscow for the solution of Oriental problems.

Ciano asked whether there was not a risk that the United States, following the example of Great Britain and France, would assume a hostile attitude towards the action of Germany. Waving his hand with a semi-circular sweep towards the horizon, Ribbentrop summarized the probable attitude of the various states. Germany's protection against France was guaranteed by her West Wall. She had nothing to fear from England, because England was unprepared. And again, the campaign against Poland would be a very short one. In Ankara Von Papen had ensured the neutrality of the Turkish Government. There was absolutely no doubt about the neutrality of all the Balkan and Danubian states. With regard to America, the German Government had taken measures through the medium of its representative in Washington and in other American capitals for the distribution of millions of copies of the latest speeches of the Fuehrer, the reading of which could not fail to convince all the people of America that Germany was going to war only for the defense of her own rights. Information which had recently come from New York had completely reassured the German Government that their propaganda had done the trick. The American Government now recognized Hitler's sacrosanct rights, and regarded with sympathy

Germany's effort to regain her rights. North American isolationist opinion had developed at an astonishing momentum, and Roosevelt himself was, so to speak, helpless.

The conversation between Ciano and Ribbentrop next turned to technical details, and Ciano asked how many submarines Germany possessed. Ribbentrop regretted that he could not give him an exhaustive reply just then. Ciano afterwards told Ansaldo that the great sage, Ribbentrop, had done nothing but declaim all through the conversation, showing that he was puffed up with pride over the success achieved by Germany during the last two years, and over the prospect of the future successes which, he claimed, were bound to come. The Italian minister's remarks had left this enthusiastic optimism of Hitler's representative completely unshaken. Ciano added that for this reason he felt that it was necessary and that it was, moreover, his duty to inform the Duce at once about the futility of the talk he had just had with Ribbentrop. In consequence the Duce ordered him to see Hitler personally and to repeat to him the communication about the non-intervention of Italy.

These last days in August, prior to the explosion, have left an indelible impression on my memory. The frequent conversations which the British and French Ambassadors had with the Fuehrer, Henderson's journeys to and fro between Berlin and London, the echoes of the Anglo-Polish meetings in the British capital, the lightning departure of Lipski and his withdrawal into complete isolation in his embassy, his refusal to see press representatives, the telephone conversations between Mussolini and Ciano, and between Attolico and Ciano, the agitation in the Nazi press which had reached its climax, the proclamations of Greiser, President of the Senate and of Forster, gauleiter at Danzig, in a word, the crescendo.

On August 26 the German Government announced the

rationing of food in the country, a symptom which in itself was quite sufficient to alarm people's minds. In Berlin life ran its normal course—"business as usual." It looked as though the people did not realize the seriousness of the implications of what was going on. The war was not popular. Hitler was not as popular as some people imagined. There was something of a feeling of resignation among the German people, but the average German citizen felt that the bow had been stretched too taut. Europe could not continue looking on at the acts of rapine which Hitler kept carrying on in the name of Germany. Sometimes his unexpected coups had brought the country to the very verge of war. The people of Germany were terrified at the thought of finding themselves surrounded by a wall of hatred, in a Europe composed of states that had been over-run and insulted. The flood of dislike rose higher and higher, pouring in from all sides until it stifled the voice of the reasonable German who, as he read the papers in the evening and listened to the radio, saw with terror that Hitler's mental aberration was triumphing.

They had started calling up large numbers of men. One of my dearest friends found, on the evening of August 27, a paper awaiting him at home, ordering him to present himself on the following morning at a barracks in Potsdam. He was not even able to get in touch with his wife, who was in the country with her parents. The German women who went through the experience of those days in such an atmosphere got a foretaste of the anguish of the years to come.

The Reichstag was summoned, and Hitler announced that "the situation was serious." These words had an ominous ring, for ever since the last war, the Germans knew that the tag, "the situation is serious," implies the imminence of terrible happenings. A War Cabinet was formed,

but no order for mobilization was issued, for Germany had already secretly mobilized. A certain number of regiments were transferred from one dépôt to another. Divisions in full battle equipment began moving in a continuous stream through Berlin. The stations were already swarming with men in uniform, and among them there were a great many hospital nurses carrying their travelling bags.

I decided upon two things; first, to look for a new and smaller house, secondly, to increase the staff of the Stefani Agency by the appointment of a Sicilian, named Angelo Vecchio Verderame. The Agency agreed to the new appointment, but to justify it I had to give a long explanation on the phone, for apparently they were under the illusion in Rome that the war could be avoided at the very last moment. I remember the impression produced on me when I saw for the first time those ration cards which a member of our commercial staff distributed to us—square cards in red, violet and yellow on which from that day the existence of each individual depended. I handed my cards to the cook, I complied with Verderame's request for permission to put up in my house during those days of tension and toil. At heart I felt glad, as I found it a help to have a colleague beside me, in immediate touch with me, especially for night work.

I noticed that Attolico had dropped his normal tone of arrogant assurance, and showed signs of preoccupation. From a hint dropped by Magistrati I gleaned that the Ambassador had begun to weigh recent political developments with a certain amount of seriousness. He had not imagined that the crisis would reach such a peak. Rather, his reports to Rome had been optimistic, even in regard to the Polish question. Hitler's hesitation had seemed to him an indication that the Wilhelmstrasse was taking into consideration the risks which Germany would run by encounter-

ing the hostility of the whole world on account of her attack on Poland. After Salzburg, Attolico had no longer any chance of meeting Ribbentrop, who was always engaged, and even his subordinates did not appear to have much time to give to the Italian Ambassador. A very definite lack of interest in Italy prevailed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Braun von Stumm was the only one who continued to visit Attolico and give him some information.

A few of us had met in the Foreign Press Club, at the corner of the Leipzigerstrasse, on the evening of August 28 to discuss events. Schneider, the president of the club, the Chief of the Berlin office of the *National Zeitung*, who usually was somewhat loquacious and even generous in volunteering "likely" bits of news, adopted a stubborn and unwonted silence that evening. Other members present included Oechsner of the United Press, Shanke of the Associated Press, Holburn of *The Times*, Jouve of the Havas Agency, Huss of the INS, and Senatra of the *Messagero*, whose personal taste made him prefer music to politics as a theme for discussion. The conversation turned on the noble letter sent by Daladier to Hitler entreating him not to bring about the catastrophe of a war in which France would be forced to take part on Poland's side. Daladier, the old soldier of the 1914-18 campaign, recalled to the old soldier Hitler the horrors of the last war. What balm to the heart were these only-too-rarely heard counsels of moderation in that atmosphere of tension! Our German colleagues, among whom was Schneider, listened attentively to what we said without making even a single comment. I sensed in their silence a hint of bitter jealousy and hatred. It is not possible that in their hearts they did not think as we did exactly—they who could not express their opinion. At heart, I kept repeating to myself, they have heard just as we have, what people are saying in the city, and like all the people

they are terrified at the mere thought that there may be a reversion to the conditions of twenty-five years ago, when Germany found herself alone against the whole world.

In the club our conversation next turned to the subject of colleagues who were preparing to pack their belongings and leave Germany. The families of some French and English diplomats had already gone. Panton of the *Daily Express* said, "No, I won't go. You will see in the end, as on the other occasions, that everything will be settled." Panton had bought a little villa on the Italian Riviera four months previously. That little villa has yet to see its owner; he is a prisoner in a German concentration camp in Denmark.

On the morning of August 29 news came that the Polish cabinet had ordered a general mobilization. Poland was not losing time. At that moment Polish divisions were guarding the frontiers and in the airports along the Corridor the Polish Air Force had planes ready to dart into the Prussian sky. As for the Germans, nobody could calculate even approximately the enormous scope of their preparations for the fray. An acquaintance of mine, who was returning from Konigsberg, assured me that the entire territory of Silesia was occupied by troops, and that also in East Prussia military preparations had been undertaken on a large scale.

But the trains continued to run right up to the last day, and there was no check on civilian travel. Not until the precise moment of the explosion was the transport system across the Corridor suspended. Hitler wired his final warning to Warsaw on the morning of August 30. The Polish Government was invited to send to Berlin, during the course of the next twenty-four hours, a representative to discuss the position. The Polish Government turned a deaf ear. The mutual assistance pact with Great Britain and

France had encouraged Warsaw to stiffen its attitude of resistance.

In the Wilhelmstrasse all the windows were a blaze of light on the last and decisive night. In my car I passed twice in front of it with a presentiment of disaster. Past experience had taught me that Hitler habitually started all his most important and serious undertakings on what seem premeditated dates, such as the beginning or the end of the month or on a Sunday morning. At six o'clock that night, in fact, the last night of an era of peace which had hardly lasted for two decades the German radio announced the outbreak of war.



## VI. TOWARDS THE ADVENTURE

ALL WARS ARE DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER, BUT I believe that no war recorded in history can be compared with the present one. The man who wanted it at all costs, and in opposition to every argument of logic and reason, under the conviction that it would lead to such an increase in his power that the mere mention of the names of Hitler and Germany, would inspire respect and fear everywhere, was obliged to change his mind. His calculations miscarried from first to the last. He was certain, first of all, that he could finish the war with a lightning stroke in Poland, which would not give time to the democratic Powers to intervene, nor even to think of any counter-measures that could stay his hand. When Polish resistance was ended, in twenty-one days, he thought that he could call off the war, and that it would be possible to enter on a new era of reconstruction without any hindrance. Instead of this the conflict went on. In the second place, Hitler trusted to the "peace offensive" which he proposed to open, to persuade the great democratic Powers that it would be futile to protract hostilities, seeing that Germany was strong and capable of withstanding even the most formidable coalition. Contrary to his calculations, the anti-German naval block-

ade which was organized by Great Britain began to take an ever-increasing effect, and he was obliged to end the stalemate and to resume the battle.

Memory recalls those early months of the war, from September, 1939, to June, 1940, as though they belonged to an era of the dim, remote past. The first black-out was a shock to the nerves and the beginning of a terrible depression of the spirit. On moonlit nights Berlin, no longer illuminated by electricity, was a spectral and melancholy sight. Air-raid warnings followed one another beneath the rays of the search-lights that blended with the glint of the stars, and in the cellar-shelters people with livid faces, and all strangers to one another, exchanged silent glances. When a raid was imminent, the first hint of it was given by the *Deutschlandsender*, the long-wave radio of the principal station in Berlin, which forthwith ceased to transmit. Everybody knew then that the moment had come for seeking shelter in the cellars.

"The enemy is listening in," proclaimed the posters in the streets, notices in the newspaper columns and on the movie screens. "The enemy is listening. Be guarded in your speech." But the German people could not refrain from talking about a war they could not comprehend, and exchanged in hushed tones fragments of the latest news in the always-crowded cafés and restaurants. Owing to the darkness, the cafés and the movies were the only places to which one could go in the evenings. But the morale of the people in those first weeks and months was good. The news from Poland was a stimulus. Within the space of eight days Cracow had fallen, and an ultimatum had been given to the defenders of Warsaw. Everybody was talking about the prowess of General von Reichenau, who, at the head of his forces, had swum a river in pursuit of the Polish army. Reichenau was one of those generals who recall pictures of

the pioneers, with bronzed complexions, features moulded out of gnarled oak.

When the war was over in Poland people talked a lot about another of Germany's most famous and most popular soldiers, General von Fritsch, whom Hitler had begun to detest as far back as the time of the occupation of Austria. One day it was announced in a communique that von Fritsch had been killed during a front-line inspection. The cause of the mysterious death of this German general will come to light only after the war; if what I heard was true he had been wounded, but refused all medical aid; he preferred to die on the battlefield. In Berlin people said that he had been murdered by the S.S.

The intervention of Russia was an incident which the German people could never grasp. On September 17 the Russian cavalry swept over the territory of Volhynia to finish off Poland more quickly. This was the process of putting the Russo-German Pact into operation. In Berlin people were wondering whether Russia would show her gratitude by helping Germany fight the naval blockade with grain and raw materials.

A strange situation had developed at the West Wall. Two hostile armies faced each other, one behind the Maginot Line, the other behind the Siegfried Line, without either of them taking the initiative. For months on end nothing occurred beyond occasional artillery duels and a few nocturnal infantry raids for reconnaissance purposes. The Germans had attached notices to the barbed wire running thus, "We have no intention of firing, provided that you don't fire." One day Lieutenant Paul Deschanel, son of the former president of the French Republic, was killed in the German lines on the southern sector of the West Wall, facing the Saar, and the German general in command gave him a military funeral with all the honors of war.

When Christmas came, with thousands of parcels for the soldiers and greetings from the home front, the tiny lights of the Christmas trees were seen aglow along the ramparts of the West Wall, and gramophone strains of hymns and carols drifted towards the Allied lines. On that night it was said, with what truth I know not, that no sentry fired a shot, but instead, there was a mutual fraternal exchange of gifts between German, French and British soldiers.

I was told about these Christmas scenes on my return from Capri where I went to spend the festive season with my family. The visit to Italy was a very short one, but long enough for me to realize that in my country the people always followed the course of the war with something of a remote and detached interest. Italy was benefitting by her neutrality by carrying on a roaring trade with the belligerent nations, and her steamers plied to and fro with heavy cargoes for European, Asiatic and American ports. A wave of optimism and prosperity swept the country. Christmas passed without a trace of worry over international affairs. Extravagance and luxury continued to be the main characteristics of life among the wealthy. After the visit paid by Ciano to Berlin, early in October, when the campaign in Poland was over, Roman circles, hitherto objective observers of the happenings to the north of our frontiers, had begun again to take an interest in politics. Ciano had gathered the impression from the German capital that the Nazi Government would be glad to extricate itself from the problem of a protracted conflict, and that they would welcome any favorable opportunity for making peace with the Western Powers. As a neutral Italy would have been able to offer her services as mediator. The speech delivered by the Fuehrer at Warsaw, on October 5, confirmed this impression. Mussolini tried to play the role of peacemaker, but the replies he received from the representatives of

Great Britain and France left him no grounds for hoping for any success. Germany had gone too far. To obtain peace she would have to restore everything she had stolen from Poland. It is hardly likely that Mussolini could have been so naïve as to hope for any successful outcome to his mediation; he merely felt that this service was due his friend Hitler.

During that period Ciano began to win for himself the reputation of being an enemy of Germany and of Nazism. The "Cianists" circulated opinions expressed by the young minister which tended to show that he had completely repented. They said that stormy scenes frequently occurred between Mussolini and his son-in-law with regard to the expediency of continuing to adhere to the policy of the Axis. My own personal opinion is that there was a great deal of exaggeration in those rumors. It would have been too much, even for Ciano, to show any inclination to a change of attitude so suddenly after his display of enthusiasm in seeking a pact between Rome and Berlin. His toadies adopted this attitude for the purely propagandist motive of "creating an atmosphere," and thus securing an honorable retreat, if need be, for their powerful protector.

To me the behavior of Ciano and of the Cianists was nauseating. To establish the Axis they had created such a reign of terror in Italy that whoever ventured to raise any objections was persecuted, maltreated and deprived of his means of livelihood; now suddenly the reverse of the medal was shown, and little Mussolini Number Two played at being anti-German. He had returned from his last trip to Germany with feelings of special dislike for Ribbentrop. It was obvious that the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs were temporarily uncongenial. Ribbentrop had assumed an attitude of extraordinary arrogance, based on the military successes of Germany. Ciano frequently complained about it

to Mussolini, and thenceforth the meetings between the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs were strictly formal, for the purpose of putting their respective signatures to agreements already previously drawn up. They had no more heart-to-heart talks.

When I returned from Italy I found Berlin deeply mantled in snow, and the temperature fallen to twenty degrees below zero. It was the first winter in the trenches for the soldiers, and Hitler had not calculated on its severity. Transport troubles made coal supplies for the capital difficult, and for fully three months the city was bereft of any means of heating. In the shops attendants wore overcoats and caps all day long. Business men and clerks only went to their offices in the morning to open letters and look after very urgent business. Rationing became absolutely rigid. All trading in gas was stopped, but we journalists were able to use our cars with only a limited supply.

Now that the curtain had fallen on the Polish drama, statistics of the devastation that had been wrought began to be available. Hitler had employed fully seventy divisions and a powerful air force to crush Poland. Warsaw was still burning, it was said. While the Fuehrer was speaking in Warsaw, on October 5, the flames were shooting aloft to the sky from the frightful conflagration. Poor Poland, who had thought that the annihilation of Germany would be as easy as cracking a nut! Sikorsky had gone to London, and Beck had fled to the southern part of the Balkans. A great many of my acquaintances had perished in the ruins of Warsaw, and many of my colleagues had died bravely in the defense of their country. But there were Germans too on the roll call of death. When you opened the newspaper you found countless crosses on the last page. Column after column of these brief obituaries ran, "Died for the Fuehrer, for the people and for the nation"—a cemetery on a newspaper

page. It was the only form of mourning that Hitler would permit. Mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts were forbidden to wear black.

I had definitely handed over the presidency of the Union to a Dutch colleague, and I made up my mind to stop attending the conferences held by Schmidt, which always struck me as carefully pre-arranged affairs. Invariably when Schmidt turned up, he started with the formal patter, "Gentlemen, I await your questions." He looked challengingly at the first speaker who ventured to break the silence with a question. It was often an idiotic one, but Schmidt replied as though he were reciting a lesson that he had committed to memory. No, such comic turns were not for me. In any case, I had never found that anything he said ever helped me in the slightest in my work.

After a while rumors of my imminent expulsion from Germany were being whispered around. I was not at all astonished at this, and I would not be taken unawares. Atolico had told me that arrangements had been made for my provisional recall, arrangements that had never been cancelled. I told my colleague, Verderame, to return to his own house, as I was giving notice to my landlord in the Meranerstrasse. I had decided to take another house which was beautifully situated in the heart of the Grunewald, outside the city. It was my intention to be seen in the city as little as possible henceforth. Instead of the cook, whom I later found out to be a spy placed by the Gestapo inside my own four walls, I chose an old Viennese servant named Martin, whom I recall as a close student of time-tables, a pedant, an impertinent rogue, and like his predecessor, a spy for the Gestapo. I learned later on, too, that my colleague and guest, Verderame, was in the habit of reporting all my statements, and even casual remarks, to the Wilhelmstrasse, exaggerating them in order to make me still more suspect.

The Gestapo listened in on my telephone, and my mail was transferred for scrutiny from the ordinary censorship to that attached to the Ministry. However, despite all these annoyances, my new abode in the Grunewald, facing the little artificial lake of Hundekehle, gave me some joy and comfort.

My head office wrenched me away from the idyllic peaceful scene to which I had gladly retired, to make me visit the battlefields of Norway, Belgium and France. The Command Headquarters were not very keen on seeing representatives of the foreign press nosing about their front-lines. The *Popolo d'Italia* had frequently asked me to go to the actual battlefields to get realistic factual reports, but the German military authorities would not allow, even in exceptional circumstances, foreign journalists to mix with troops in the firing-line. They had organized the "Propaganda Companies" for the home press, consisting of poor devils who were more soldiers than journalists, who took up the typewriter and the machine gun in turns, and of whom many were killed in this dual fulfilment of their tasks. The Ministry of Propaganda, however, sometimes succeeded in securing from Command Headquarters authorization for the foreign press to visit positions in the rear of the battle lines.

It was only too apparent from my observations on this assignment that what the Germans failed to do in this war was to justify, even in the slightest degree, their acts of aggression, by confining themselves to strictly indispensable military measures. If, for instance, when they occupied Czechoslovakia and Poland, they had taken no steps beyond ensuring their security in the military field, leaving local administrative bodies to carry on their normal tasks without disturbance, the furrows of hate which they have

ploughed in the souls of the stricken peoples would not have been so deep.

But Hitler arranged that hot on the trail of the armies of occupation should follow the political and police organization of the S.S., with its Reichsleiters and Gauleiters transformed into governors and commissars. These were bloodthirsty satraps without exception; they inaugurated campaigns of man-hunting, they filled the prisons, they maltreated women—in a word, they reduced the people in the occupied countries to despair. It was not merely a policy of occupation, but of actual genuine brigandage, at the sight of which Don Roderick's cut-throats would have blushed with shame. The rights of the individual and of the family—even the rights of humanity in any form, no longer had any weight. Everything was permissible to the S.S. in the name of some alleged supreme law of necessity. I have often heard of instances of German officials complaining openly about the brutal excesses with which Himmler's organization was stained in the occupied regions. Decidedly the German soldier waged war, but he neither tortured nor maltreated his opponents; on the other hand the soldier in the black uniform of the S.S. was a cruel brute, and was known in Berlin, in Nazi jargon, as the "political soldier." When, years before the war, I had heard that the German Government had taken over castles such as Vogelsang and Marienburg, where a so-called chosen band of Nazi youth was trained in a very strict school to convert them into "political soldiers," I had not the faintest idea that their ranks would be the nursery of a brutal corps whose tenets were justified by their fanaticism. They were the Fuehrer's most loyal henchmen and, though they were not conscious of the fact, they erected a rampart of terror and hatred around Germany.

The attack on Norway was the outcome of a delusion. It

is true that the victory over Poland had satisfied Hitler's aspirations with regard to the restoration of Danzig and of the German provinces to the Reich; it had also satisfied his desire to see the elimination of the corridor which separated Pomerania and Silesia from East Prussia, but the fact that the rest of Poland had been occupied meant a dead weight hampering Germany's arms. The Germans found the harvests destroyed and the organizations controlling the nation's economic life completely out of gear—the stores completely burned, the whole population suffering all the misery that the war entailed. Furthermore this campaign and its aftermath had brought Germany's frontiers in alignment with those of Bolshevik Russia, a development which caused considerable anxiety in Berlin.

In December Russia attacked Finland in order to consolidate her possessions in the Baltic. I must say that this act of aggression stirred up a genuine wave of indignation in Italy as it did in other countries, but it was regarded much more cold-bloodedly in Berlin. Hitler made no gesture to show his disapproval. The Wilhelmstrasse tried to conceal its embarrassment. At Christmas Hitler wired warm greetings to Stalin, adding his personal congratulations to the head of the Soviet Union on the prosperity of the Russian nation.

The German Government was confident that the Great Powers in the West would become reconciled to the disappearance of Poland from the map and would stop the naval blockade, but the very opposite happened. Germany wanted iron from Sweden, and she also needed to have the sea route open for the transport of her most pressing needs. The blockade was causing incalculable losses. London and Paris remained deaf to all the eloquent declarations made by Hitler and his minister of Propaganda to the effect that Germany had a right to *Lebensraum* in the East. It was

then that, in sheer desperation, the order was issued in Berlin for the campaign against Denmark and Norway, a campaign that might be considered as having been premeditated, like all Germany's previous forays. Peace with the West was clearly an impossibility. As the surgeon who cuts into a cancerous growth under the vain illusion that he is helping to heal his patient only aggravates the disease, by every new crime he committed Hitler made his own position worse, and removed farther from the German people the likelihood of securing peace.

On March 10 Ribbentrop arrived in Rome to ask Mussolini what he would do should Germany be obliged to undertake a new offensive. The offensive in question was, of course, the one directed against the Western nations, Belgium, Holland and France. But, no matter what attitude Mussolini adopted, Hitler had made up his mind to undertake that offensive. I have a mental picture of Rome looking forward anxiously from week to week to the end of hostilities in Europe, as she imagined that the Powers would eventually become resigned to the changes that had come about on the continent. In Rome they did not regard the international situation as seriously as in Berlin.

Why had Hitler let slip the opportunity of the offer made by Queen Wilhelmina of Holland and King Leopold of Belgium to act as mediators for peace overtures? Mussolini should have realized that Ribbentrop would not have been sent by Berlin, had he not known that Hitler had already decided to make an all-out attack on France and afterwards on Great Britain. He tried to gain time, repeating once more what had been said at Salzburg, namely, that Italy would not be ready for three or four years to intervene in aid of the Reich. The possibility of a tête-à-tête between the Duce and Hitler was discussed, and a meeting did in fact take place on March 18 in the saloon car of the Rome

train. It lasted for three hours. It was then arranged that Italy should speed up her own armaments and take part in the war alongside Germany as soon as possible.

Mussolini's decision was firm and irrevocable. Italy would not have been able to remain neutral long. The neutrality of the peninsula virtually ended with the meeting at the Brenner on March 18, although Italy did not actually go to war until some months later. The Duce had been swept off his feet by Hitler's megalomania.

Had France not come to a miserable end after a fortnight's fighting, had she held out for a long time—say a year or two, Italy, owing to Mussolini's attitude, would have joined the war in one way or another. When France collapsed so speedily, the intervention of Italy was only precipitated.

One day the question of responsibility for what happened will be investigated and each of the leaders will have to give an account of his deeds. The chief responsibility, in my view, will lie with those who, by intrigues and lies, created the atmosphere of the Axis. Without this Mussolini would not have been blinded to such an extent that he no longer considered the interests of his own nation, but merely his own prestige, his own power, and his dominion over Europe side by side with Hitler. It has been said that he formed his decisions alone, as he saw that his way of thinking was not shared by his immediate collaborators. He ordered Cavaliero to speed up military preparations, and he muddled arrangements generally in such a way as to reveal his limited acquaintance with armaments. The generals were dismayed and terror-stricken as they saw this headlong dash to the verge of a precipice. It is alleged that Ciano was opposed to the scheme; most decidedly all the General Staff were. Mussolini's only supporters were those who at all times cringed

before him and whose slogan was, "Mussolini is always right." The country knew nothing until it was too late.

In the meantime, Hitler forged ahead with his colossal and hazardous plan. The invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg was heralded by this preamble in the form of an ultimatum to their respective Governments: "If we meet with resistance on the part of the countries which we intend to occupy, we shall crush such resistance by every means in our power." It looked more like the pronouncement of a madman than a statesman, but Holland and Belgium put up a sturdy stand.

Five days after the beginning of the invasion I was escorted with other journalists to the territories that had already been occupied. We motored from Berlin to Aachen, which was the starting point of what I called "the pilgrimage." Where the main road crossed the course of the Meuse we observed the first evidence of destruction and wreckage. The Maastricht bridge, which had been cut in two, was listing towards the surface of the river. The first Belgian fort on the other side of the river wall was riddled with shells. I came upon a dwelling-house that was so gutted that I could see the interior of the rooms, with the furniture higgledy-piggledy and corpses lying amid the wreckage. The havoc wrought by the Stukas had been appalling. Shell holes broad and deep enough to swallow three houses, roofs and all, pitted the ground.

We continued our journey along roads that had been badly smashed up and rendered almost impassable in parts, strewn with cemeteries of cars that had been shattered beyond repair. Suddenly I was struck by the sight of a peasant guiding a plough drawn by two oxen in a field alongside our route. The contrast between peace and war could not have been more strongly emphasized. Another sight that I have never forgotten was the continuous procession of civilians

returning to their villages, using any kind of transport available, from bicycles to handcarts on which were piled the few wretched indispensable articles from which they refused to part. These wretches had fled to the rear when they heard the first thunder of artillery, but after they had been overtaken by the German mobile columns they retraced their steps, realizing that flight was futile. I believe that the exodus of the masses in Belgium and France, in the vast areas it covered, and in its numbers, surpassed the mass migrations of antiquity. At a rough conjecture some five or six million fugitives underwent twice, in a very brief space of time, a tedious march in quest of security and peace—the first time to flee from the invaders, and the second time to return to their devastated homes.

Brussels was like any other city occupied by the Germans. The people themselves were listless and resigned. There was a great bustle in the streets, and the shops were so busy that they were completely sold out in eight days. Newspapers printed in Germany were on sale immediately after the occupation. An undefinable sense of suspicion brooded over everybody. And the sense of inhibition that comes from reserve, the simulated indifference, the stifled hate, made the German soldier feel embarrassed and frightened, because he could not understand, and never would understand that he was not engaged on a mission, as he had been told, but on a marauding expedition. The German military commanders and the political heads of the occupied countries not only knew that there could not be cordial contacts between the subject peoples and their own soldiers, they did not so much as make any effort to create them. Their task was to carry out the orders of Berlin, which were strictly confined to the code of martial law.

The Italian Ambassador Paulucci de Calboli remained in Brussels, although, according to the German military au-

thorities, he should have packed up his belongings and returned to Rome, as his mission ended with the German occupation of Belgium. From the German standpoint an occupied country was regarded as part of the territory of the Reich, even though it might be given the euphemistic name of Protectorate or Governorship or some other title. Since matters stood thus, diplomatic representatives of other states became superfluous in the capitals of such occupied countries. In the case of Italy, the German military command did not insist too rigidly on Paulucci's departure, but it was made clear to him that his stay in Brussels could not be unduly prolonged. When the Belgian forces ran the risk of being completely wiped out, Paulucci tried to intervene between Leopold and the German command in order to avoid further bloodshed. Before long, Leopold gave orders to capitulate—but Paulucci certainly did not influence him in the matter—and as prisoner of war, Leopold was sent to a castle in Flanders. Even then the Italian Ambassador tried to maintain contact with the King, although he was in captivity. It must not be forgotten that King Leopold is a brother of the Crown Princess of Italy, and consequently related to the House of Savoy. I happened to arrive at the moment when Paulucci had just played a very successful trick on the German Command. They had forbidden him to visit the King, but having placed on the hood of his car two little flags, one Italian and the other with the Iron Cross on a white field, for the German army command, he set out for the castle in which Leopold was imprisoned. The sentries let him pass, and Paulucci had a long conversation with the young monarch. The purpose of his intervention was fundamentally in favor of the German cause. He suggested that the King, the Primate of the Belgian Church, and what still remained in Brussels of the Belgian Government should inaugurate a policy that would be more con-

ciliatory towards Germany and towards its interests as the occupying Power; that the Belgian people, placing their faith in the word of their leaders, should realize that actually being under the "armed protection" of Germany was not a calamity; and that the Allies, by giving up the idea of resistance to the bitter end, had in a definite sense betrayed the people of little Belgium after having dragged them into the war, mainly for the protection of their own interests.

I believe that Leopold refused to accede to the Ambassador's suggestion, but two days later the Primate of the Catholic Church in Belgium issued a pastoral letter on the lines urged by Paulucci, advocating a benevolent attitude towards the German soldiers. The German Command did not show the faintest gratitude for this personal intervention on the part of the representative of Italy. Paulucci was cold-shouldered, the general in command of the army of occupation refused to meet him again, and a protest was made to Rome through diplomatic channels about the Ambassador's "unwarranted meddling." Soon afterwards he was recalled from Brussels.

Our "pilgrimage" from Brussels to Holland, and from Holland to Flanders lasted two days. The Germans were in the neighborhood of Calais. We spent some hours at the headquarters of the army under Reichenau's command, in the vicinity of Enghien. The general seemed to me to be always alert and as cocksure of himself here as he was on the plains of Poland. One of his adjutants told me that every morning, always with his monocle adjusted, he was in the habit of doing a marathon walk at an athletic stride from Command Headquarters to the most advanced outposts of the army. Formerly, when he was a subordinate to von Blomberg, he was termed "a political general," a figure behind the scenes, who could exercise a certain influence over the Fuehrer, by whom he was considered "the best of my

generals." He too died mysteriously, like so many other generals who had come under the suspicious eye of Himmler.

As we advanced over the battle area I was struck by the fact that great stretches of territory showed no trace of battle, while others were strewn with corpses, wreckage, shell-holes and bomb-craters. For instance, after having passed through a village in which fighting had taken place, I came upon a stretch of fifty miles which showed no traces of war. Perhaps the only indication to show that an invading army had passed through it was the sight of numerous wrecked vehicles piled up on both sides of the road; but there were no shell holes nor bomb-craters nor dismantled fortifications. The advance of the Germans had been by leaps and bounds, so to speak, and it was obvious that the various defensive lines where a sturdy resistance had been encountered were separated in many instances from one another by miles. The countryside was by no means completely strewn with obstacles which had been placed in the enemy's path by the defenders as would have occurred in trench warfare, but it consisted of big stretches of intact ground alternating with battle areas. It was quite evident that the defenders, faced with the overwhelming superiority of the attack, had only been able to stem the onset of the invaders with the greatest difficulty and only where the nature of the ground permitted it. Therein lay the explanation of the phenomenally short duration of the campaign in the West. Combats were only a matter of a few hours, but they were intensely fierce. But these short-lived engagements had left in their wake indications of unprecedented devastation.

Outside Dunkirk, in a little village named Bregues, our column halted, for Captain Willis, our guide, said that he had definite instructions from Command Headquarters not to approach too near to the battle area. He did not wish that we should enter Bregues, for when we were just on the

outskirts of the village, we saw a thick bank of black smoke billowing skywards from its deserted houses. Somehow I had the impression that I was not looking at an actual scene of battle, but at the appurtenances and scenery of a set in an open-air film. These shattered and blazing buildings, the wrecked church and parish hall, the almost illegible names over half-demolished shop-fronts—all this panorama of devastation and squalor had the atmosphere of make-believe about it that one finds as a background in adventure films. An Italian colleague of mine had the misfortune to be placed under arrest by German soldiers at Bregues. Our convoy, following along the lane behind the church, had climbed a bastion that had been built for the defense of the village, the work of Vauban, as were almost all the fortifications in the neighborhood. From an artillery observation post we were able to follow the developments of a German attack in the valley beneath us which was opposite Dunkirk. At most it could not have been two miles from the Western fort of Dunkirk to the observation post. Almost simultaneously Virginio Lilli of the *Corriere della Sera* and myself had the same idea, namely, to go through the wood in the valley beneath us in order to get nearer to the scene of combat. But Lilli was unlucky; he had not gone three hundred yards before he was pulled up short by an abrupt order: "Halt!" He found himself facing two German sentries.

Every attempt at explanation was unavailing. To begin with, Lilli did not know a word of German. As they did not understand Italian, he tried English on them—English on two soldiers of the army that was fighting against the British! I only know that they promptly jumped on him, and took him from one military post to another, covering some ten miles in the process. He told me afterwards that they led him through clearings strewn with corpses and across a

in marsh in which an entire division had been engulfed in the mud. They pushed him along with their rifle butts until his shoulders ached, for they thought they were dealing with a spy. Lilli trusted to luck, and was set free after four hours. It happened that at one divisional headquarters there was a German officer, who, in addition to knowing Italian, was a constant reader of the *Corriere della Sera* and in particular of the articles by Lilli himself. So he came back to our convoy, where we were all very sorry for him, with his clothes all muddy and torn and his face red and perspiring, to be taken before the unspeakable Captain Willis who was in charge of the convoy and who threatened to report Lilli to the High Command for being guilty of a breach of discipline during the course of his journey.

With the exception of such exciting interludes, these trips to the front were calculated to exasperate any competent journalist. We were not permitted to be present at battles, we were not placed in suitable environment to describe any engagement, but everything possible was done to keep us as far as possible from the zone of fire, and we were shown only ruins! On another occasion, a fortnight later, when we made a second trip of this kind, the officious Willis forced us to make an endless series of halts, because he wanted to greet old acquaintances of the last war who were living in the battle area. I was convinced that those days were absolutely wasted ones, and that the German officials had planned these trips in order that we might write our reports in accordance with a settled scheme that fitted in with their propaganda. They even prevented us from telephoning to our papers during the journey: that was only possible when we got back.

But even in Berlin the task of a journalist was more than difficult—it had become monotonous. It all boiled down to insipid comment on the official bulletin, which was nothing

more than an amplification of the series of conferences which were constantly being held at the Ministry and did not tell the whole truth. Any attempt to show initiative was forbidden. Even had we been able to get interesting information we should not have been able to use it. Our work became more and more standardized every day. If there had been only one journalist for each country to report to his national press, it would have produced exactly the same results.

But this did not last long. Early in June the big battles of Flanders and Artois ended with a sweeping German victory. The French army was routed along the whole front. The Germans were approaching Paris. It would have been imprudent to leave Berlin, for incidents were following each other with lightning speed.

In the meantime Attolico had been superseded by Dino Alfieri. His removal was yet another capitulation to Berlin's orders. True, Attolico was no longer his old self. The pace of the war had terrified him, and any enthusiasm for the Axis had vanished from his soul. When he sent reports to Rome, they were couched in a very alarming strain: even her easy but stupendous victories were insufficient to assure Germany that supremacy for which she was seeking, for the war would not end with them, but would probably last from five to ten years, and Europe would go headlong to utter ruin. Such were the views Attolico now expressed on the situation. When they read these statements at Palazzo Chigi they just shook their heads and placed them in the archives. Attolico must be mad. Why should he be so pessimistic at the very moment when the battles fought by the Reich had been won in a period of some weeks at the outside, and had ended with the unquestionable total defeat of the enemy? Besides, how could they retrace their

footsteps now? The Axis was established, and it would have to continue.

Mussolini would not change his views. As a matter of fact, Mussolini would not listen to the voice of reason. The appointment of Alfieri to Berlin was made as a prelude to the entrance of Italy into the war. The German Government, having been informed by its ubiquitous spies of the change in Attolico's attitude and of his reports to Rome, demanded that he should be transferred immediately. So he had to go; on his return he was appointed Ambassador to the Vatican, in place of Alfieri.

After the defeat of France the Duce was afraid that the war was hastening to an end, in which case Germany alone—and not the whole Axis—would profit by the victory. According to Mussolini's view, Italy could not stand aside as a mere spectator of events. She must take her place in the fight before it ended. "What? At the eleventh hour?" those who counselled caution, asked. "Yes," Mussolini countered. He was all the more anxious for war now that he had a chance of marching against the French whom he detested. He could never shake off his old antipathy to the French régime, which had fought against Fascism from the very beginning. When it was realized that Mussolini was in a feverish hurry to join in the fray, many people tried to oppose him, maintaining that it would be madness to go to war. Chief among these were the members of the General Staff, who maintained that Italy was still quite unprepared to take the field. A Declaration of War, they held, would mean not only pitting herself against France, who was now exhausted by her fight with the Germans—and the psychological repercussions of this act would be painful—but also against Great Britain, who was still intact, mistress of the seas, and a mighty obstacle to any attempt on the part of Italy to

maintain the connection between the peninsula and its African dominions. There were generals who threatened to disobey orders, and men in important political posts who were quite prepared to resign in support of their views. But it was all of no avail. Mussolini felt himself secure in his role of dictator. He had no doubt that the nation would follow him. Germany could not lose. So Italy too had victory in her pocket.

At six o'clock in the evening of June 10 the radio announced Italy's entrance into the war. Italy was at war. Without arms! Italian forces had already gone into action against the French in Savoy. I hastened to hear Alfieri, speaking from the balcony of the embassy in the Standardstrasse to some hundreds of Fascists to announce that we were actually at war. The Rome radio broadcast Mussolini's speech in the Piazzo Venezia. It struck me that the applause from the crowd was neither of great volume nor was it sustained; after a few minutes the relatively feeble roar died away, and its place was taken by marches and anthems. A people who for twenty years had known nothing but the will of the despot, and in meek obedience to him had become accustomed to look at the world and its problems through his eyes, a people who for twenty years had lost the faculty of expressing their right to decide as a sovereign state, because the despot Mussolini would not allow anybody to interfere with his own procedure, and in order to exercise his power without hindrance had contrived to surround himself with a network of vast and complex organizations—such a people is not in a position to make a stand even in times of the utmost gravity. In the course of twenty years Mussolini's Fascism had transformed the conscience of the nation. There was no form of national activity that did not pass through his filter.

A few circles of the intelligentsia managed to maintain a certain degree of independence. The working classes could only grumble, though good-naturedly—and unavailingly. On the whole, the people could not be said to feel easy and satisfied with what was going on, but they could neither speak nor act, as their tongues had been paralyzed and their hands tied. To a people reduced to such a negative state of mentality war was nothing more than a further tax imposition. Both war and taxes were lamentable burdens, but how could they resist them without an organized front, especially when they were long unaccustomed to making a stand against anything? Furthermore, there were in Italy a fair number of youths who had become intoxicated by Fascist theories and imperialistic propaganda, who would be quick to obey and almost glad to fight.

The nation had no idea that it was not prepared for war from the point of view of armaments. Military preparations were “palace” secrets, known only in the Duce’s office and the Ministry of War. Even the ministers themselves had no idea as to the number of guns, tanks and planes that Italy possessed.

The entrance of Italy into the war amazed and annoyed the Germans. I was in the house of some Berlin friends that evening, and not one of them showed the faintest trace of appreciation or gratitude for Mussolini’s gesture. What was the point, they asked, of this intervention on the eve of a sweeping victory for Germany? What had the Italians done beyond jumping on the back of a France that was already beaten to her knees, and whose military power had been liquidated by Germany’s armed might? Was it a noble gesture? Furthermore, would not Italy’s entry into the war entail troubles and difficulties for Germany in the further prosecution of the struggle? “Your preparations are

totally inadequate," those German critics went on. "That being so, why did you not remain neutral?"

As a matter of historical fact, Berlin never asked Italy to help her in the field. The German generals were convinced that even under the most favorable circumstances Germany would gain no advantage from Italian support. The military commissions that returned from their visits to Italy gave a picture similar to that which von Blomberg had outlined for the Fuehrer after his first glimpse of the organization for the defense of the peninsula. But Mussolini did not wish to figure as the poor and feeble relation who takes a back seat and is forgotten. He longed for the moment when he could restore Italy to her pride of place and, incidentally, elevate himself by success in the field. "I want a couple of million corpses," he said one day, "in order to be able to take my seat as a conqueror at the peace conference and dictate my terms too."

When Paris fell I, who was in Berlin during the whole of that crisis, never heard a word of real unfeigned enthusiasm from the German people. My servant Martin, who always acted as though he were made of stone, handed me a telephone message with news of the occupation of Paris without the slightest trace of emotion. Had he informed me that there were chickens for sale in the market, he would have displayed far more interest. No flags were hung out by the people of Berlin and there were no demonstrations. I pictured to myself the oration that would have been staged in Italy had Mussolini entered Paris instead of the Germans. In a broadcast Goebbels explained that the occupation of Paris was an event of secondary importance, and that the German people, conscious of their great mission in this war, were not the kind to give way to extravagant demonstrations of exultation. I do not know whether he was

sincere, or whether the German people detested war to such an extent as to be insensitive to the symbolic significance of what had happened. History was repeating itself—the history of the years 1870 to 1940—and Gianbattista's theory of cycles and recurrent cycles, that is to say of historical cycles that keep repeating their courses now seemed more than ever before to have been prophetic.



## VII. WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORESEEN

THE LAST SHOTS BETWEEN ITALIANS AND FRENCH WERE exchanged on the morning of June 25, 1940, a morning of brilliant sunshine which lit up the peaks of the Savoy Alps in radiant beauty. From the very start this had not been a war, so much as an alignment of two armies opposite one another. In addition to their lack of really warlike spirit, these armies did not even know what the fight was about. On one side were the French forces, paralyzed by the realization that on the other fronts the position was utterly hopeless for their country, and that while the Germans were approaching the capital, France was rapidly going to pieces. On the other side were the Fourth and Seventh Italian armies, which had been suddenly mobilized from their homes in Piedmont and Liguria, and sent to fight in obedience to a command which seemed to them inexplicable, for they were utterly lacking in any psychological and practical preparation for a war of this kind. It was only in Rome that anyone knew the why and the wherefore for this unexpected decision. The Declaration of War had not been preceded by any propagandist political campaign. Mussolini alone knew the hidden motives for this abandon-

ment of a neutrality which had seemed to the Italians to be the only reasonable attitude, in the midst of the upheaval of which Europe was the theatre.

Never had Italy felt so conscious that she was situated on the fringe of the continent, as during that period of Europe's paralysis, when she lay athwart the Mediterranean, which she proudly termed "Mare nostrum." Never had she been so glad to have for her protection the massive and mighty chain of the Alps, a chain that had but few gaps. In Turin, in Genoa and in Milan a few hours before Mussolini declared his intention of taking part in the war from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia, life ran its smooth course of normality without any presentiment of the troubles ahead. The dramatic atmosphere of the hours that precede a grave decision was limited to those few officers in Rome who transmitted the pre-emptory order given by Mussolini. But outside Rome nobody expected anything. The Fascist press did not lay any great stress on the imminence of war. There were just some articles in the Rome newspapers inspired by the Government, which made vague Sibylline allusions to the possibility of Italian intervention. Even in Germany, as I have said, it was not considered necessary for Italy to fight, and while such a possibility was not entirely ruled out, in the European capitals it was considered remote and hardly worth entertaining. It is true that Nice, Savoy, Corsica and Tunis had always been among the urgent claims of Fascist propaganda, in and out of season, but after all, they were regarded as merely unenthusiastic aspirations, bound to crop up periodically like the chorus in a song.

To resume, the country was completely taken by surprise at the decision to go to war. The army, whose task it is always to obey, answered the reveille as always. But for all that, it was utterly unprepared. It would be impossible to

estimate the numbers of men ordered to march to the French frontiers, and it is almost certain that even in the Ministry of War no reliable statistics on this point were available. Seated at his desk as Under-Secretary of War, Cavallero carried out the orders given him by Mussolini as Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. General Cavallero was one of the few men who later ended by suicide his wretched existence as a servile follower of the Duce; men who, whenever Mussolini opened his mouth, were ready to carry out his despotic whims, and to whom the most important thing in the world was to hold their jobs. The most incapable general in the Italian army held the responsible post of Under-Secretary, at the Ministry of War. Cavallero had finished obscurely at the end of the last war, as a divisional commander; he then left the army to enter business. When Mussolini first met him he was manager of a firm engaged in the manufacture of rubber in Milan. The people of Milan, who knew him very well, were astounded at his appointment. It was quite obvious that Mussolini was an utterly incompetent chief, if this was a specimen of his selection of suitable collaborators.

Under the command of General Guzzoni the two armies hastened to take up their position along the French frontier. They had not even the faintest conception of a tactical plan. At first the General Staff tried to convince Mussolini that this "picnic" might have unpleasant reactions. If it was a question of fighting, he ought to know that the army had no up-to-date equipment; it had remained in the 1918 stage, so far as armaments were concerned. They had antiquated field-guns, about 149 medium-bore guns and howitzers that had done duty on the Carso and in the battles of the Piave, and other pieces from the Skoda works belonging to the Austro-Hungarian artillery. They had, furthermore, very scanty supplies of ammunition and the mechani-

cal transport system was inadequate. For twenty years the army had been trained in the principles and methods of defensive warfare, and nobody had ever so much as suggested offensive warfare. Since it was a question of marching against France, the Ministry ought to have known that the Italian ramparts on that frontier were inadequate, as there were only a few old forts and scattered pillboxes, barely sufficient to give practice to the military schools and Piedmontese regiments during the summer months. Those of France, on the other hand were equipped with all the latest technical devices. The fort of Chenaillez alone was worth the whole system of the fortifications of the Italian Alps, which consisted of forts and strongholds that recalled the wars of the last century. Some batteries still consisted of bronze cannons, such as are shown in military museums. From Rivoli, where Command Headquarters was stationed, Guzzoni sent General Cavallero a number of objections and observations. The only reply he received was the following order, in the form of a circular addressed to the commanders of the units scattered over the Italian front, and signed by Mussolini: "Fight even though you are short of arms."

Nevertheless, fighting did not begin everywhere along the front line immediately after the Declaration of War. On the Bardonecchia and Cesana sectors skirmishing started on the 18th. The French Artillery replied with well directed aim. As the Italian army was unable to advance, there were only left to them the few well known passes, chiefly Monte Ginevra and Mont Cenis, and the gap to the north of Ventimiglia, where operations could be carried out at a quicker tempo. But the Italians had no adequate motor-transport for essential services. While it could not be said that the Army Service Corps was short of provisions, it had no proper means of transport and in the field-kitchens there were not enough utensils to cook the food. Altogether it

was a slipshod method of waging war, with makeshift devices patched up at the very last minute, and an appalling lack of organization. Some of the artillery was ancient and rusty and blew up with the first shots they fired, killing some of the gunners; the ammunition, too, had not been overhauled and checked.

By good luck the fighting only lasted for a fortnight—not long enough for the Italian public to be aware that we were at war. Food had not been rationed, and the only indication that hostilities had commenced was the black-out in the big centers. There were no air raid shelters, however, and no gas-masks were distributed. Still less interest was shown in the war outside Piedmont and Liguria.

Then one day news came from Germany of the complete defeat of France. I was in Berlin at the time. Millions of Germans gave a sigh of relief. Things had turned out better than had been anticipated. It seemed incredible that France could have been crushed in such a way in one fortnight. But had the war ended for good? The English had been driven from Dunkirk, forced to abandon the continent and retreat to their own islands. No doubt the German air force must have taken precautions to forestall new British landings on the coast of Belgium and France. Furthermore, the overthrow of France involved the complete collapse of the French Democratic regime, whose assistance Britain would have needed to organize further resistance. Idols like Gamelin and Weygand had proved unable to prevent the French defense from being crushed and mangled under the steam-rollers formed by the German panzers. No, surely the war could not have rushed to such a sudden conclusion.

In the breath-taking atmosphere of those dramatic hours we journalists made our preparations to go to Compiègne. The scene of the Franco-German armistice has been described by hundreds of witnesses before me. It is sufficient

for me merely to emphasize the insult which Hitler wanted to offer to France by selecting for the conclusion of this armistice the very same locality in which on November 11, 1918, France imposed her terms on a conquered Germany. Not only the very same locality, but even the very same clearing in a forest, among the monuments and inscriptions recording the humiliation of Germany twenty years previously. Among these inscriptions there was one before which Hitler halted for some minutes; it ran thus, "Here fell the criminal pride of a German Empire which aimed at enslaving all the other nations of Europe."

Hitler took his full revenge, even to the most minute detail. By being present at the reading of the death-sentence on France, he wished to have the satisfaction for which he had been so long waiting, of looking the humiliated Frenchmen in the face. The chief French delegate, General Huntziger, looked grave, Admiral Le Luc could not hold back his tears, while the other members of the delegation, immobile as marble statues, took their seats and stared rigidly before them.

Huntziger, having come to Compiègne on Pétain's instructions, knew that he had to sign the armistice with Germany; what he did not know was that its ratification would be contingent on the signing of another armistice—the armistice with Italy. The instructions he had received did not go as far as that. But the German ultimatum stated distinctly that hostilities between the Reich and France would cease only when a similar agreement had been drawn up between France and Italy.

He tried to get into communication with Bordeaux, then the headquarters of the French Government. But there was no telephone line in existence; there were barely the field lines which only reached as far as a certain locality half way to Bordeaux. Long hours of feverish waiting passed. The

telephone mechanics did their utmost to extend the military line already existing in order to secure contact with the French Government. With the precipitate retreat of the French forces the war situation had converted all those tracts into one desolate and stricken battle area with a non-existent traffic system. The French delegation was obliged to motor to Paris to spend the night there. The next day it returned to Compiègne with Pétain's endorsement of the terms of the armistice. France agreed to conclude an armistice with Italy also. A second delegation actually left on the same day by plane to sign at Villa Incisa, on Lake Maggiore, the document ending the war. The die was cast.

Words are inadequate to describe the feelings with which the German people regarded this delay of one day in the armistice negotiations. The suspense of twenty-four hours engendered among the German people the greatest contempt and resentment against us Italians. "You only came into the war yesterday, when the whole thing was practically over," they growled; "and on account of you we must wait to secure peace for ourselves. Between today and tomorrow, the day for signing, other German soldiers will be killed or wounded, and it will be all on account of you." "These Italians, of course," said another, "they are always like spokes in our wheels." "Now Mussolini has had his own little war," said another, "perhaps he will be satisfied."

How I wished that the Fascist leaders, and the Duce especially, could hear these words. I sensed the unlimited scorn in which the Germans held my country and my people, both of them innocent; it hung over me like an incubus. At that moment of taking extreme decisions the abysmal gulf between the two races was very apparent. There rose to the surface all the aversion and congenital antipathy of the German for the Italian who is despised as a mandolin player, a clown, a fatuous ass, a dawdler and a

nobody. I have travelled in a great many countries, but I am certain that in none of them are we Italians held in such poor esteem as in Germany. Many countries, which do not feel towards us the loathing entertained towards us by the Germans, pay tribute to the genius of the Italian race; but in Germany, whenever they speak with any generosity about Italy, they mean her climate, her natural beauty, her landscapes and her masterpieces of art. As a people the Italians are utterly worthless in German eyes; if there is anything worthwhile in Italy, it is of German origin; if there is a genius in Italy, they discover his German ancestry. Even Mussolini, when the Germans saw that he was an outstanding personality, had to have German ancestors, if we are to trust the authority of certain genealogical researches made in Berlin.

The swift collapse of France upset all hitherto entertained conceptions of war. Nobody anticipated that the great and powerful Republic across the Rhine would fall like a ripe pear shaken by a gust of wind. All the capitals in the world were smitten with bewilderment and terror. The general impression was that either France had not fought, or that the military power of Germany contained some mysterious element of invincibility and invulnerability that transcended all the experience of history. In short, Germany was deemed invincible. Her monster tanks had swept across France crashing down on every obstacle at a lightning speed. To what was all that due? the nations anxiously asked. What was the secret of the German victories? Everybody knew that France was ruled by a corrupt and weak Government, but politics was one thing, and war another. The very mention of the French army had hitherto inspired respect both in Europe and abroad. Some tried to explain the collapse of France as the result of strategic blunders on the part of the French General Staff, which consisted of

survivals from the previous war. Gamelin was behind the times altogether. Weygand was a little more modern, but his innovations were no guarantee of success. Practically the whole gang of French generals, men of the old school, reservists of the battles of the Marne and of the Ardennes in the last war, should have been placed on the retired list. But there were no young men to replace them.

“France,” said Mussolini one day, “is going through the process of senile decay. France is sclerotic and rambling in her speech like certain old men who refuse to die.” It was contended, at any rate, that it was these doddering old fossils who brought the Republic to ruin. Democracy, instead of renewing itself and giving a fresh vigor to France, had corrupted her and made her apathetic and indolent.

In Paris, right up to the very eve of the catastrophe, the citizens were more interested in jazz and the latest song in vogue in the cafés; they paid little heed to the war. Afterwards, when the brief war was ended, there was speedy resumption of revelry, though on a limited scale in the haunts of amusement—this time, however, for the amusement of the German army of occupation. It was said to have been a fatal mistake not to have continued the Maginot Line to the sea, for had that precaution been taken the Germans would not have been able to carry out the surprise manœuvre. It was affirmed that the German Air Force was far superior to that of France, which was defective in a great many aspects, and that this inequality in aerial armaments had been decisive, because aviation after all had been the real protagonist in the struggle. It turned out that there was no power liaison between the French, British and Belgian forces, and that in consequence there was no reliable system of co-operation between the three armies. As the Belgians had withdrawn from the war, alleging that they had been abandoned by their allies, so the French accused

the English of not showing the faintest consideration for the difficulties in which their army had been involved.

Bickering started about the question of responsibility. Laval, taking advantage of the weakness of old Marshal Pétain, inaugurated the policy of an understanding with Germany. The phenomenon was by no means new. Even before the war sporadic tentative veerings to the right and approaches to Nazi Germany had asserted themselves. The Comité de Forges, and the big iron-work industries of France, had supported this movement with their money and influence, so Laval could say that he was the expression of this French drift to the right, which was as yet undeveloped, and had no solid support. French Fascists had paralyzed France by hampering her moral as well as her material preparations for war. And later on, the fact of having to remain for more than six months in a state of complete immobility and inactivity behind the Maginot Line, facing a hostile Germany, had developed a condition of dangerous slackness—almost a state of trance—among the French. A conviction had evolved that France would never have to fight. But for all that France was not slow in rallying to the call to arms. The French armed forces did their duty, and the supply of war material available, by no means trivial, was perfectly serviceable. The French armored cars were superior to the German, both in quality and in resistance to shell-fire. The French system of fortifications put up a fierce defense in France and in Belgium—on this score it suffices to recall Liége. Furthermore, there was neither a shortage of arms nor of munitions. It was only in the air that their strength was negligible.

We must not look for the causes of the great defeat in the inferiority of the defenders, but in the valor and the ability of the attackers. The German army was marvellous, to say nothing of long-designed tactical plans. There can be

no doubt that a program had been drawn up by Hitler and the Chief of the General Staff, Franz Halder—with the possible co-operation of other generals. What actually evolved was a developing movement, which continued to adapt itself to the terrain as it progressed; it was, in short, a series of unforeseen situations which the Germans succeeded in dominating in a masterly manner from beginning to end. The merit was neither that of Hitler nor of his General Staff but of the perfect machine which they put into the field. It was the merit of the army and the air force, including all the divisions and specialized forces; it was the merit of the millions of officers and men actuated by a deep spirit of mutual solidarity, a profound sense of discipline, initiative, capability and imagination, while every non-commissioned officer was as competent and alert as a general. The result was a harmonious interplay such as had never been seen before, combined with an astonishingly perfect technique and unlimited good luck. Thus it was that Germany conquered, and France disappeared from the ranks of the Great Powers.

These phenomena did not pass unobserved in Italian circles. Mussolini, that worshipper of brute force, must have been spell-bound by the miracle. How he must have congratulated himself for not having heeded the objections put forward by his General Staff! How he must have patted himself on the back for having risked the gamble of Italy's entry into the war! The god of war was on the side of those who showed audacity. Mussolini decided that Italy, through his initiative, would become powerful, and once France was liquidated, the time would have come to teach Great Britain a lesson in Africa. The Duce's eye was on Egypt, Kenya and the Sudan—but also on Tunis.

When he learned that Hitler, notwithstanding the armistice, had decided to continue his advance until he had oc-

cupied with his armed forces the French coasts facing the Atlantic, Mussolini prepared on his side to extend at least as far as Nice his scanty conquests, which were limited to a tongue of land stretching out a little beyond Modane. He decided to occupy Corsica and to pounce on Tunis. There was some talk, too, of Germany and Italy impounding and dividing among themselves the remains of the powerful French fleet.

It was just at this point that the trouble started. Perhaps it was with the design of not giving too much of the loot to an ally who had contributed practically nothing to the victory—although Mussolini claimed that the German advance in France had been speeded up by the pressure exerted by the Italian forces on the Savoy front—that Hitler opposed any territorial seizures by Italy beyond what she had already conquered, which was tantamount to nothing. On no account would he consent to the Italians making a landing in Corsica or Tunis, which was garrisoned by the French Colonial army. But he put no limits to his own onward march, and after concluding the armistice sent his armies practically to the Pyrenees. He requested Mussolini to wait until peace had been concluded. The Italian press started a great campaign after June 10 about claims in France and Africa. One newspaper went as far as to demand all Savoy for Italy. The armistice of Villa Incisa was a ludicrous codicil to Compiègne.

Germany next started talking about making many concrete demands on France, such as the exploitation of her chief mineral and industrial resources, the employment of French labor in the provinces of the Reich, and the use of the seaboard of the English Channel as a jumping-off ground for an attack on Great Britain. But not one word about Italy.

Ciano went to Germany in the middle of July in time to

hear Hitler deliver in the Reichstag one of those periodical appeals for peace, which he made a habit of issuing after the occupation of a new slice of European territory. How odd it sounded to hear him turn to Great Britain with an appeal for "a little reasonableness and good sense." Ciano was in the front row of the diplomatic gallery, and by his presence he endorsed the concurrence of the Fascist Government with the Nazis in this quaint belated peace move. It was quite obvious that those present at that meeting did not show the enthusiasm displayed at previous gatherings. There was practically no applause. It looked as though Hitler were indulging in a monologue dealing with some remote future contingency. To a certain extent this lack of enthusiasm was abnormal. If ever any occasion called for a definite reaction in the Reichstag it was this one, when a speech was being delivered, on the morning after a great victory, appealing for a definite ending of the war. But nobody any longer had any faith in Hitler's pleas for peace—not even his own immediate Nazi entourage.

Attolico was no longer there, with his normal sour scowling expression, but in his place was Alfieri, a decorative figure with an eternal cheerful smile and the deportment of a cavalry officer, elegant and perfumed. A magnificent reception was given at the Italian embassy at which the usual leading statesmen were in attendance, Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Himmler, Funk, etc., all except Goering. But on this occasion the official pronouncements were brief and were not published.

Finally I was ordered to accompany Ciano on a visit to the battle-fields. We went by special train. Ciano and Ribbentrop were in separate saloon cars with large retinues, among whom I observed that the vast majority were high-placed military officials. The expedition wound its way through the region to the rear of the Maginot Line. Once

more I traversed the theatre of the great battle of the tanks that was fought at the end of May. The Maginot Line had remained intact. In the fortifications and galleries linking the vital points of the defense system there were only a few sentries posted. I saw that the French technical personnel, the engineers and the experts had been left at their posts, because they alone could attend the complex electrical and hydraulic systems which needed constant observation. But the Maginot Line was as much *virgo intacta* as in the beginning of its construction.

The focal point of our trip, in accordance with the program, was the Hill of Douaumont, famed twice in recent military history, first in connection with the famous battle of 1916, and second in connection with the battle in this war. The summit of the hill commands a view of the richly cultivated French countryside, bounded on the east by the dark contour of the mining area. Craters caused by the bombs of the Stukas were dotted among the prolific but abandoned cultivated areas. They had erected a palisade astride the round summit of the Douaumont fort, and in the center of this was a platform on which stood an easel with a huge blackboard on which a topographical map had been sketched. When we saw one of the German generals—apparently the victor of Douaumont—approach the blackboard and point with a rod towards the topographical chart, Ansaldo, who had been with me in the Saar region, and who, while watching the campaign for the plebiscite, had been very much amused by the arrogance which the Germans displayed in shouting their propagandist slogans, recalled to my mind in a whisper a motto which was much in vogue among the Nazis then, and which he now repeated sotto voce in a chanting tone: "Saar immerdar" (The Saar will be always there). I saw what he was driving at. We were not to be spared similar raucous rhetoric this time.

For two hours the general, with a minuteness of detail and an asphyxiating pedantry, made us follow on the map the vicissitudes of the fight. On the map were clearly marked not merely the positions of the two opposing forces, but the numbers of the divisions and the regiments and the names of the commanders. I had only to copy them out. It was like the recapitulation by the C.O. of a battle in field manœuvres.

When I returned to Berlin I sent to the Stefani Agency a realistic account of the battle of Douaumont, making use of the points I had gleaned from the general's lecture. I thought that it was permissible to publish numbers and names, since the war with France had been finished for some time and the armistice had been signed. On the contrary! When this article appeared, I was urgently summoned by the authorities and got a severe lecture, because, according to their contention, I had been guilty of an act of indiscretion. The official of the Ministry of Propaganda who sent me a very sharp letter of reproof, said that the High Command were very indignant about my indiscretion.

After Ciano's visit Hitler sent Mussolini, as a birthday present, a railway train complete with black-out blinds and anti-aircraft defensive equipment, guns, searchlights, and all the other latest technical devices which at that time were to be seen only in Germany. I believe that it was the only train of its type in Italy.

In the last week in July my wife came from Capri with our baby to visit me in my new rooms at Grunewald. Naturally the impression which Berlin made on her, who had come from a country which the war had not affected at all, was appalling. She hardly recognized the city as the Berlin she had known. What depressed her most were the long queues in front of the shops and even in front of the box-office windows of theatres and movies. The long delays thus

occasioned exasperated the public, whose nerves were already very much shattered by the bombardments which the capital had suffered at the hands of the R.A.F. Apropos of all this, here is a little story that went the round in Berlin. In front of a shop an endless line of people were waiting. They were all grumbling and protesting. Suddenly a man at the tail of the queue made a gesture to show that he could stand it no longer and went away declaring that he would dine with the man who was responsible for all that misery—namely, the Fuehrer. After a couple of hours he returned. The queue was still there waiting on the footpath like a long snake and the people were grumbling more than ever. “Well, did you dine with him?” shouted somebody when he took his place again at the tail of the queue. “There was a queue waiting for him too!” he replied in a disconsolate tone.

There was no black-out in Capri, my wife said. I learned from her that our island still followed its old tranquil existence—loafing, picnics and musical evenings. There were no signs of any restrictions, except the rationing of electricity by allowing the use of it for a few hours in the morning, and again immediately after midday, and a little more again in the evening up to a specified hour. The people of Capri went to bed by candlelight. Capri was full of Germans, mainly women, who came from all parts of the Reich.

My wife opened my eyes with regard to a blow which I had brought on myself. She asked why it was that signed articles of mine no longer appeared in the *Popolo d'Italia*. I replied that my service with the paper had undergone no interruption, and that there must have been a mistake. Like all the other papers, the *Popolo d'Italia* reached Berlin only after a considerable delay owing to war conditions, and consequently I was unable to check up on the omission of which my wife spoke. In the evening, when I was able to

telephone Milan, I asked why my signature had disappeared from the columns of the paper. The vague replies I received concealed an obvious embarrassment.

Next morning, obsessed with a presentiment of bad news, I rang up Milan and asked our general manager, Giulio Barella, what the devil was the matter. Barella's only reply was that it was an arrangement by the Government, and that thenceforward I was not to consider myself as their Berlin correspondent. He added that a colleague of mine was on his way to take up my job. And this after twenty-one years of service, twelve of which had been spent in representing the *Popolo d'Italia* in Germany! I tried to get some information in the Standartenstrasse; of course Signor Schmidt's hand had been at work.

Alfieri informed me that the German Government had "decided" that I should no longer represent the Italian press in Germany. In order to please Schmidt, while waiting for the chance to find a substitute for me, my signature was *sic et simpliciter* removed from my articles—and all this without letting me know. Alfieri, who was there on the spot, might at least have sent for me and put me on my guard, but he did not do so. I had been rather doubtful about this man from the very moment that he had set foot in Berlin. I saw that he was too inclined to cringe before the Wilhelmstrasse, and too eager to win the confidence of the Nazi blockheads. After his arrival he had appointed an Italian journalist named Franchini, representing the *Giornale d'Italia*, as his echo and confidant—a man after the heart of the Germans because he fawned on the Nazis. I was like smoke in the eyes to this Franchini. I am certain that he used to pass on to Schaeffer of the Ministry of Propaganda everything that we Italians said among ourselves.

A sort of conspiracy against me had developed. Every-

body except myself knew about the steps that were about to be taken to remove me in my post. Alfieri adopted a paternal attitude, and tried to impress upon me his views that such was the way in politics. He quoted himself as an instance of this. He had been so many times "torpedoed," and later restored to his job, only to be sacrificed once more later on. "We are soldiers," he declared, "and when our commander gives his orders, whatever those orders may be, we must take them as the will of destiny and obey."

I was glad to leave Berlin, but I felt piqued at witnessing the triumph of the intriguers—Braun von Stumm, Schaeffer, Franchini, and my own colleague Verderame. Finally I discovered that there was a huge dossier compiled against me in the Ministry, and another of a more compromising nature in the offices of the Gestapo, both based on information given by my colleague and my fellow-workers. I had been shadowed in order to find out whom I visited socially, and a microphone had been smuggled furtively into my rooms. Only much later, however, did I learn that some of my acquaintances had been summoned to the headquarters of the Gestapo, and had been questioned at length about me. One of them, who was completely panic-stricken when he was asked to call at the Prinz Albrechtstrasse, was ordered to cultivate my company more assiduously in order to follow all my movements and report on them afterwards. And all this time Schmidt was pressing for my removal from Berlin. I believe that the only reason that I did not end in a concentration camp was the fact that I was on the staff of the *Popolo d'Italia*, which was the Duce's paper. Knowing that I would have been able to apply for support if they tried violent methods, they had decided to undermine me secretly. It was of no avail that I fled to the Grunewald in order to escape the enquiries that were made by my persecutors, indeed, it exasperated my enemies still

more and made the situation worse. Attolico, who had started this hostile campaign, was now far away from Berlin, and was salving his conscience in the shadow of the Vatican, consoled with all the millions which he had piled up. A few months later he died of a bilious attack. He held his post as Ambassador to the Holy See to the end, and in his last hours received a special blessing from the Pope.

Then began the business of "liquidating" what had been my job in Berlin for twelve years. I asked Morgagni what decision he had arrived at with regard to the Stefani, of which I was also the representative. He replied that I was not to leave Berlin until he had got in contact with my successor by a regular "change of guard." In other words, from that moment the two posts of correspondent of the *Popolo* and of the Stefani which I had filled alone, were now separated. Enrico Massa, who was available after the elimination of the London office, was appointed to the former job, while the latter was allotted to a man of about thirty, named Roberto Suster.

I gave notice that I was giving up my house in the Grunewald, and this aroused frenzied competition because everybody wanted to get it, among others Boehmer, the Chief of the Foreign Press Department in the Ministry of Propaganda, Schmidt of the Foreign Office, and Alfieri himself, just to mention people whom I personally knew. Later on Boehmer won against all competitors, and I formally handed over the house to him. Poor Boehmer had no premonition that his residence in my house in the Grunewald would be brief. Barely a year later he was arrested and thrown into the Moabit prison on the charge of having given information on very vital issues to the American press. Later on, after a long martyrdom he was set free, and was sent to the Russian front where he died fighting valiantly. Two R.A.F. bombs fell in the garden behind my old house,

destroying the terrace but leaving the walls intact. Every time I passed through Berlin later on I went to have a glimpse from the roadside at my *buen retiro*, where I enjoyed many unforgettable days of tranquil solitude.

I was to have time to reflect. Moscow was one possibility and most decidedly was a temptation, all the more so as it was a question of inaugurating a new office. But how could I bring myself to say good-bye to the *Popolo*, with which a great part of my life had been spent? Would I not lose all the rights due to me for such long service on that paper? Morgagni set my mind at rest. My rights would be recognized, he told me.

He desired a "change of guard" to be carried out with all possible solemnity. For those who are not acquainted with these customs of Fascism, I may mention that it is a full-dress ceremony carried out in the presence of officials of the highest rank and in the presence of all who work in the ministry or in the office in which the change occurs. The head of the ministry or of the office or of the industrial concern delivers a panegyric in which he praises the man who is giving up his post and the man who is destined to succeed him. The panegyric is merely a pretext for singing the praises of the Duce. Then the man who is resigning his post and his successor exchange fraternal handshakes, and the meeting ends with a general "alala" to Mussolini. The procedure is reminiscent of certain funeral ceremonies when a panegyric is delivered before the interment, coupled with hopeful expressions with regard to his heir. Morgagni referred to my long service in Germany, and introduced my successor Suster to the Ambassador and to all those present. Among those present I recollect that there was also a representative of the German Ministry of Propaganda.

Meanwhile I had already sent my wife back to Italy. I had to give a couple of banquets to celebrate my departure,

and give an opportunity to reply to speeches full of banal platitudes; I had paid visits that I had no desire to pay—in short, I gave a good send-off to Suster, for whom I expressed wishes for better luck than had been my lot. In reality I pitied the poor fellow, for his situation was not a pleasant one. Even though he knew that we were seeking the good-will of the German authorities it would be necessary to maintain a balance between the two press departments on either side of the Wilhelmstrasse, those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry of Propaganda—between Schmidt and Boehmer who loathed one another. Anybody who showed himself a little too friendly with the former was hated by the latter.

At the end of August, having returned my keys to the owner of the house and said good-by to Martin, my servant, who pretended to be deeply touched (after having betrayed me to the Gestapo), I left Berlin by car with two of my friends, a man and his wife who said that they desired to accompany me as far as Innsbruck. The gloom of a motor journey from Berlin to Munich in war-time is unimaginable. The road is a melancholy, depressing and seemingly endless journey to one who has known it in better days, when it was teeming with traffic, when the wayside stores were not closed and deserted on account of lack of gas and oil supplies. Apart from the filling stations which still function, it is no longer an arterial road but a funereal avenue, a long lonely track leading to death. Things were a thousand times better when one drove along in fear of the policeman or the guard who was always ready to pounce on you and impose a fine. Today on the motor road the wild goats stray with impunity from one side to the other.

At Innsbruck I parted from my friends. I did not know as yet whether I would be entrusted with a post in Moscow, as Morgagni had told me, but if it were so I should be

obliged to travel again through Germany. A future with many notes of interrogation lay before me.

In Milan, I tried to ascertain from the general manager of the *Popolo d'Italia* the decision that had been arrived at concerning me. "None," he said. "You know well that there are no jobs available abroad. Those in London and Paris had of course to be closed owing to the war. On the other hand we cannot have you in Berlin—orders to that effect came from on top. Perhaps it is advisable to wait. Who can tell but that the position may be brighter in autumn?" I had a suspicion that he was banking on new victories, new occupation of territory, and that he thought that at no far distant date the Germans and Italians would enter London. I told him that I did not expect great changes, I thought that Germany with her victory over France had ended the series of her European incursions. I suggested that the best thing for me to do would be to resign. So it was that I left the *Popolo d'Italia*, on which I had begun to work in 1926 under the control of Benito Mussolini.

In Rome I had to return several times to the Government offices to expedite matters. In those offices there was an ever-swelling inflation of superfluous posts. There were hosts of secretaries. They all received miserable salaries, but nevertheless spent heavily. They had hardly any work to do. The only ones who continued to work for their starvation wages were the humble and patient pen-pushers and employees who were waiting to be pensioned off. The others, who were mere political nominees, posed as Solons. Their dogma was the "power politics" code of the invincible Germans—the power politics that had become legendary in Roman circles. If anybody tried to point out that, after all, the war was not yet over, and that the lust for violence which had become habitual with the Germans would in the

long run be their ruin, these wise fellows looked on him with pity—and sometimes denounced him.

As for Great Britain, they contended that she did not count at all. Had she been a great nation she should have come to the aid of France, they said, but as she had not done so, she was finished. Germany would hurl her powerful implements of death against the British island, first destroying her from the air and then invading her. There was a lot of talk of a great German expedition across the English Channel. It was said that along the coast of Belgium and in the Dutch canals a large fleet, composed of very swift special barges for the purpose of transporting a large army across the Channel, was being marshalled. During the days which I spent in Rome a squadron of the Fascist Air Force, under the command of General Fougier, was being organized to leave for the airfields of Belgium and France where it was to co-operate with the Germans in the destruction of England. Mussolini had requested this "honor" in a letter to Hitler, and Hitler had graciously granted his consent. One of those who were preparing to go with Fougier had been the manager of the *Popolo d'Italia* in my days, Vito Mussolini, the Duce's nephew.

But all were not so enthusiastic. Some diplomats, as well as special newspaper correspondents and many army officers, expressed their doubts. They thought that things could not always go smoothly, for Hitler's Germany, strong as she was and well prepared as she was, had been little tried by the war so far, for her victory over France was a lightning one. Now, however, she would be dealing with a more dangerous and implacable enemy, an enemy who was adopting the hunger blockade, and was stirring up the neutral countries against her rival. And there was America, who would give the help of her boundless resources to that enemy of Germany.

I should point out that even those who had been accustomed to believing in the 'indestructible power of Germany did not love her. They merely wanted to drive home the argument that Mussolini did the right thing in lining up alongside Hitler, because Europe was destined to have him as her master for the future. Furthermore, they believed in a Germany destined to save Europe from Bolshevism. Their slogan was: "Germany or Bolshevism."

In the Department of Popular Culture, Pavolini, who succeeded Alfieri, had set up three of four offices or new sections for establishing links with Berlin. Countless despatch-riders laden with heavy dossiers were constantly going to Germany. The machinery of the Axis entailed the use of hundreds of tons of paper for reports, translations, expositions, etc. Rocco, in control of the headquarters of the foreign press, had converted his office into an actual branch of the office controlled in Berlin by Schmidt. He never held his daily conference with the representatives of the foreign press until he had read on the tape machines a report of Schmidt's reaction to the situation. Rocco had appointed an official whose duty it was to get Schmidt's instructions every morning. Rocco never gave any information or expressed any view to the foreign press which was not inspired by the attitude of the Wilhelmstrasse. He had established a most thorough system of subservience to the German political outlook. The very same system was adopted towards the national press. Once I witnessed a violent outburst by Braun von Stumm because he had noticed a discrepancy between Gayda's comments and those made by Megerle in the *Boersen Zeitung*, on the attitude of Maček, the leader of the Croat peasants. Berlin expressed the view that Maček deserved sympathetic support, while Gayda lashed that agitator in a ferocious leading article.

The German embassy in Rome had assumed colossal pro-

portions. Its headquarters were still in Via Conte Rocco, hidden in the grounds of an old-world country mansion. It no longer consisted of just one palace, however, as there were a great many newly-built pavilions, hidden by trees, alongside it. The personnel of the embassy comprised over a hundred extra officials, including counsellors, secretaries, translators, typists, to say nothing of the Press Bureau which was entrusted to the control of two officials, one to deal with foreign affairs and propaganda, and the other solely as a representative of Schmidt. One of the most highly ramified departments was that of the military attaché. Lieutenant General von Rintelen, whom they appointed a general about the time of my arrival. Every two or three days some emissary from Ribbentrop turned up by plane. The Prince von Hessen was constantly travelling to and fro between Berchtesgaden, Rome and Capri, in which island he owned an estate.

Simultaneously with the colossal development of the German embassy in Rome our embassy in Berlin also increased its personnel. Alfieri had taken with him a considerable number of new assistants, young men attached to the diplomatic service. He had set up a maze of sections and sub-sections which muddled and confused even his own staff. Alfieri had transferred his own private secretary to Berlin as well as a certain number of Civil Guards who formed his escort when he was at the Ministry. When he went to present his credentials to Hitler he travelled through the streets of the German capital in a magnificent car preceded by Italian Civil Guards on motorcycles, in the same uniforms that they wore in Rome.

We had also a non-stop influx of German visitors to Italy that summer. The term "tourists" was by this time a misnomer for these emigrant Huns. They did not come for sightseeing, but to hunt up curios and to buy them. There

was no room in the Roman hotels, as these pseudo-tourists had taken them by storm. The foodstuffs in the shops disappeared very quickly, because the visitors from Germany who had come well provided with "tourist liras" pounced upon them. Some dealers in "antiques," anticipating the arrival of these visitors from the Fatherland, bought up all the cheap bargains in the way of old junk for the lowest possible figure in liras. It was the Germans who depreciated the value of Italian currency, and Mussolini let them have their way for a long time. The time came, however, when he realized that they were stripping the country bare for a handful of marks, and he put a check on the abuse, by imposing a more vigorous customs control at the frontier. But it was too late. I heard of a German woman who went the rounds of the Roman millinery shops, buying a little here and a little there until she eventually succeeded in taking back to Germany fully 2,000 yards of elastic tape.

The black market had not yet started operation in Italy. The food was considerably better than in Germany, and many delicacies that Berlin had not known for a long time, were still to be had in Rome.

I have no idea of the reaction of the Germans of that period to the Roman monuments and museums. Most decidedly the type of German tourist that was turning up daily was quite a different person from the tourist of some years back, who used to come to Italy with a Baedeker and a camera in his suitcase, and who had barely arrived at his hotel before he asked the porter for the visiting hours at the excavations and the art museums. The new type of visitor had no time for such dilettante sight-seeing. In the daytime his inquisitive and greedy eyes scanned the contents of the shops and stores, and in the evenings he lolled luxuriously in the lounge of the Tarpeian Rock, of the Cenotrian Grotto, of the Biblioteca del Valle, drinking Castelli wine

and singing German airs. None of this was lost on the Romans, for the shop assistants used to chant, as they cycled to work, "Trink, Bruederlein, Trink."

The circulation of the *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican organ, was mounting in a most phenomenal way. The Fascist Government was not in a position to prevent it. The interest taken by the average Roman in the dispassionate and slightly frigid comments of the Catholic newspaper savored of censure. Another thing I noticed was that in the Roman bookshops first editions of Hemingway, Stefan Zweig and even of Churchill's speeches could be had. The Germans, accustomed to seeing on the shelves of their libraries only the words of Nazi authors or sentimental Christmas stories with the "Stille Nacht" motif, in Rome found books forbidden in Germany sold without any ban.

Eventually Morgagni put an end to my spell of loafing and informed me that the Duce had given his approval to my nomination as correspondent of the Stefani Agency in Moscow. I was to set out as soon as possible. So I started at once making my preparations. The Soviet embassy did not keep me waiting long for the visa. I made arrangements with the management of the Agency with regard to the financial side of my mission. Later on Morgagni informed me that Alessandro Pavolini, the Minister, would receive me in order to give me instructions.

Originally Pavolini was not a politician, but a journalist and a literary man. He wrote colorful articles and travelogues for the *Corriere della Sera*. His newspaper sent him to Finland, where he was very popular, not so much through any merit of his own as because his father, a learned Oriental scholar and a student of philosophy, who had died some years previously, had translated the *Kalevala*. Since the Orientalist, Paolo Emilio Pavolini, had steeped himself in the study of the language of Finland, the legend

developed that his son, who was destined later to be Minister of Popular Culture, also knew that language, and was a great friend of Finland. As a journalist and a writer, Pavolini revealed the inferiority complex of those who suffer from being excelled by others. As a politician and a statesman he was a mere arriviste.

He received me with studied cordiality. He said he was pleased that I had received the appointment. He was very perturbed to hear that I knew nothing about Russia—absolutely nothing. He said that it was an exceedingly interesting country, and that the material for study in it was extremely new and original. Stalin's Russia, he added, was being kept under close observation. Many legends had been built around that nation, but the Fascist Government had been informed that Stalin was progressing towards a slow, but radical transformation of Bolshevik regime. I ought to observe the new experiments in the social order, the innovations in the Soviet family life and the religious toleration that had developed. "You will dig yourself in well," he said in conclusion, and added nothing further, because owing to his very scanty knowledge of the subject, there was nothing more he could add. "Try to work in harmony with your German colleagues in Moscow!" he shouted to me as I rose to leave the room.

This was the kind of viaticum with which I started on my journey. I sent a wire before I left informing my friends in Berlin that I was passing through the city.

At the Brenner Pass station I had an unpleasant surprise. I had overlooked, without knowing it, a supplementary regulation in addition to the customary inspection by the police for crossing the frontier. The Carabiniere who checked the passports said nothing at first—he did not even make the slightest objection; but when the train was about to start, he returned to my compartment to request me to

alight. I tried to protest, but all to no purpose. I was escorted to an office in the station where there were many police-officers with braided uniforms, three or four head inspectors, the usual number of commissars and a swarm of uniformed agents—an abnormally formidable array of officials. One of the inspectors informed me that without an anticipatory communication to them from Rome I could not continue my journey.

“But what communication?” I asked.

“You should have seen that a telegram allowing you to leave the Kingdom was wired to us,” he replied.

“But I know nothing about such a regulation.”

“So much the worse for you. You should have thought of it.”

“And now, how long shall I have to wait?”

“Perhaps a week. Perhaps longer.”

“But I must proceed to Moscow without delay. Allow me to telephone to Rome.”

“I am sorry. The telephone is only for official use.”

“But I want to telephone to the Stefani Agency, and get them to warn your headquarters.”

At the mere mention of police headquarters they became more human. Finally they allowed me to put in a call to Rome. I got in touch with the manager of my Agency who luckily had not left the office. I told him about the incident, and I urged him to speak on my behalf to Bocchini, the police chief.

I had an hour's wait. Around me was a crowd of officials entering and leaving the room, and passing on orders to one another. They explained to me that there would be a meeting the next day between Mussolini and Hitler at the Brenner.

There were several arrests that night. In the room next to mine, they actually searched three travellers who, like my-

self, had been detained in the middle of their journey. Protests and curses reached my ears. At last a telephone message came giving instructions to let me continue my journey.

At the station in Berlin the first person I ran into was Schmidt, who was hurrying to catch a train.

"So I hear that you are going to Moscow," he exclaimed in a bantering tone. "That's a magnificent job!"

I knew without his telling me that it was a magnificent job, especially after that interlude in Berlin.



## VIII. BEFORE THE RED KREMLIN

I TRAVELED IN RUSSIA FROM THE FRONTIER TO MOSCOW, passing through Minsk and Smolensk, in a comfortable railway coach divided into first and second class compartments to seat two or six passengers. There were no compartments for one traveller only, unless that traveller got tickets to pay for the empty seats. There is no sex-distinction in Russia. Seats are taken as they are available, and men and women sleep side by side in the carriages. The carriages are overheated, and are equipped with radio sets which every now and then—and sometimes even at night—blare out dance-music and news bulletins, to the annoyance of those who want to sleep.

Although it was September, the nights were already cold and the country was white with snow. We waited for four hours at the frontier in an enormous building with a large bench shaped like a horse-shoe, on which the porters deposited our luggage, while our passports were checked and we underwent the usual customs inspection. It was a tedious process, but it was carried out faultlessly, with the greatest courtesy on the part of the officials, all of whom were very young, rather deprecatory, and, I thought, slightly

pathetic-looking. They took charge of and passed all my belongings after giving me an official receipt for them. The single exception was a gramophone record which was, curiously enough, a Russian one, but the author, apparently, was not of the post-revolutionary era.

I was strangely fascinated by the type of official I encountered. As I have already said, they were rather young and beardless, and showed an intelligence above the ordinary. They wore the long ash-grey cloaks of the Russian army. They exuded a strange perfume which titillated the nostrils. This perfume, they told me, was the standardized product of a state factory, and its scent followed me ever afterwards during the whole time I dwelt in the Soviet Union.

The soldiers, who, of course, did not come under customs control and were waiting with their haversacks and blankets outside the station for the signal to board the train, were mere boys. You would have guessed the age of many of them as something between sixteen and seventeen. The rifles they carried were twice as tall as themselves, and looked too heavy for their childish frames. I got in touch with them later on, when they were seated, side by side in the dining-car, where we were almost asphyxiated by smoke and where waitresses, with ultra-red lips and nails, were serving tea and vodka. The boys were not very communicative, and preferred to sing songs which sounded ineffably sad. One soldier, who seemed to be a general, with a badly-scarred face, and looked very young for his rank, sat down at a table where there were three soldiers. They neither rose nor did they salute. This did not seem to surprise the general, for a few minutes later he was engaged in a friendly chat with them as though they had all four been old comrades. Incidentally, these were the last few weeks during which there was no obligation on those of the lower ranks

in the Russian army to salute their superior officers. Subsequently this salute was made compulsory by Marshal Timoshenko, the Commissar of War.

I arrived in Moscow with a mind eager to receive new impressions. At Bielo-Rusky station, in White Russia, I met Relli, the secretary and interpreter to our embassy, who had come to take me in his car. Relli was the indispensable expert in all Russian affairs and problems, so far as the Italians there were concerned. Although I was under the impression that he had already booked a room for me in a hotel, I observed with amazement, as we were collecting the luggage, that an official came up to us and asked Relli in Russian if I was the correspondent of the Stefani Agency. When he nodded assent, the official gave instructions that I was to go to the Hotel Metropole, in which a room had been reserved for me. Now I had informed no living soul about the date of my arrival, and I know that the embassy, which alone knew of my arrival, had not given information to anybody. How then did this Intourist official get to know about me?

A few hours later I was conducted to an enormous room with a bathroom adjoining. It was a room with very heavy furniture, broad carpets and old prints on the walls. The manageress of my floor, a middle-aged woman, speaking correctly in my own language, asked me if I was pleased with my quarters. From the huge windows I could see in the distance the slope leading to the Red Square, and the curious bulb-shaped domes of the Church of Saint Basil, towering from behind a maze of modern buildings.

When I went down to the foyer of the hotel to write my name in the register, a man suddenly took his post by my side and followed me wherever I went. He was the first G.P.U. agent who had been instructed to dog my footsteps — a rather commonplace individual in a heavy greatcoat

with a fur collar. I did not know at the time that another member of the G.P.U. had already settled down in an arm-chair on the landing opposite my room. He was my Guardian Angel Number Two.

The first impression Moscow gives one is of a certain magnificence, not so much on account of its imposing buildings, as because of the width of its streets and squares. It is only in the center of the city that the buildings that have been recently erected are lofty and have a certain dignity, especially in the Gorkovo, Petrova and Kirova Avenues, which are arteries of outstanding magnificence. These highways look like American streets, with their vast streams of motor traffic and their crowded footpaths. Those giant buildings, the Palace of the Syndicates, Lenin's Library, the Hotel Moscow and the Palace of the Soviet, are monumental structures of a severely rationalistic style of architecture. But of course the most striking sight of all is the rectangular dark red silhouette of the Kremlin, surrounded by its broad moat—a fortress rather than a palace.

One mingles with the crowd as it sweeps along like a torrent, climbing steep acclivities and driving along esplanades, past circumvallations and bastions, or along the banks of the River Moskwa, spanned by enormous bridges, and flowing parallel with the tracks beneath which runs what the Russians call the eighth wonder of the world, the "gut of Moscow," the Metropolitan Railway, which was built under the direction of Kagonovich. The thought may occur that Moscow has perhaps usurped the claim of being a great capital; Leningrad is more beautiful, more noble and more splendid. Moscow is a country town that has become a metropolis, with some 5,000,000 inhabitants. In spite of the fact that it is the State capital, housing the Government and the Party, it has the look of an unfurnished city. Those abnormally wide spaces with relatively modern structures

surrounding them, the wide spaces with very few trees and suggestive of barrack-squares, make a startling impression on the newcomers.

Previous to the reforms introduced into Russian society and family life by Stalin, reforms which Pavolini had hinted at in my farewell visit to him, conditions in the Soviet Union were such that it might be said there were two Russias, the one that cherished its patriarchal and rural attitude of the compactness and affectionate solidarity of family life, and the Russia of the young men full of ideas, for whom the family did not exist, whose "family" was the party or the syndicate. There was, for instance, the case of the professor who used to translate the newspapers for our Ambassador. Three years before my arrival in Moscow this poor man lost his only daughter, who at the age of sixteen left home one fine day without informing her parents, and went to live with her companions in the Komsomol. Father and daughter became estranged and no longer took any notice of each other when they met in the street. On the other hand, I know many Soviet families who through the whole revolutionary period right up to the present day, have adhered to the spirit of the cohesion of the family in the most rigid form. And one often meets officers and soldiers of the army carrying their infants in their arms on buses or in the streets.

The young people in Soviet Russia have no religion. They are slightly cynical, are saturated with rationalistic ideas, are discursive, with a strong bias towards polemics and politics. But when I went there, several churches were open, believers were allowed to attend religious services, and the authorities were beginning to be less insistent in their atheistical propaganda, leaving everybody free to do as he wished. The contradictory tendencies in Russian life which had held sway for so many years, were slowly disappearing. The sale

of Christmas trees was permitted at Christmas, with the difference, though, that instead of being lit on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, they were lit on New Year's Eve, and the biggest and most ornamental of these Christmas trees was set up in the great vestibule of the Palace of Syndicates.

I was struck by the ardent quest for learning which the Russian people showed. The Party had encouraged this tendency, and given facilities for its gratification. In the introduction to the constitution of the School of the Soviet Union it is written that the Bolshevik youth should have the gates of knowledge thrown open to them "with the liberality that had been lacking in that field under the authoritarian regime." As a matter of fact, the Soviet people, as they emerge from utter darkness, seem to have a great thirst for learning and attend in large numbers the educational institutes, the academies, libraries and museums. Lenin's library, which, with its 9,000,000 volumes, might be regarded as one of the richest in the world, was crowded every day with people of all ages with a thirst for knowledge. Stalin's regime has accomplished a very great deal in this field. It found a crude and illiterate peasant people, and has already given them something more than a mere elementary education.

I learned that the one serious drawback to life in Moscow was to the problem of finding somewhere to live. This is understandable when one remembers that in the course of a few years the capital has more than doubled the number of its inhabitants.

Many diplomats were obliged to live in hotels while waiting for Burobin to secure a house for them. Burobin was a special official in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, who looked after all dealings with foreigners. He got houses for them, as well as furniture which could be rented; he found

servants and put those who needed such services in touch with the doctor or the midwife; indeed, without the help of Burobin, a foreigner would have been unable to live in Moscow. Hardly had the stranger arrived in the capital, before he passed from the hands of the Intourist agency into the maternal and helpful arms of Burobin. To take a case in point: I needed a man or woman secretary to read the newspapers and translate their contents for me. I think it was Henry Shapiro, of the United Press, who suggested that I should employ a Russian woman, who had already done work for other colleagues of his. He told her to call on me, and we settled matters to our mutual satisfaction. But as I was waiting for her the following day, she telephoned to say that she regretted that she could not take on the work I had offered her, as she lived too far away from my hotel. I came to the conclusion that she was simply making up an excuse, and that somebody had induced her to change her mind. However, there was nothing for it but to telephone Burobin to get me somebody else. A girl was promptly sent to me without the slightest delay. Her name was Maria Leschinskaja, and she was destined to help me right up to my last day in Russia.

When I went to the Press Office of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to introduce myself to its chief, I had no idea that I should run into an old acquaintance. They took me to the proper office, and as I entered a man rose and bowed, a man whose face was almost hidden under an enormous shock of hair. When he tossed back this mane there emerged from beneath it a glabrous, irregular, bespectacled countenance. In a flash I recognized Balgunov, who had been the delegate of the Tass Agency at the Congress of News Agencies at Oslo, and on that occasion had had a serious quarrel with my president, Morgagni. We were not on cordial terms with the Soviet Government in those days.

Balgunov brought to the Congress an invitation from his Government to hold the Congress of the Agencies in Moscow in the following year, and Morgagni, under the impression that he was interpreting the desire of Rome, and backed by his colleague of the D.N.B., rose to affirm that the Agencies in the Axis countries would on no account take part in a congress if it were held in the Soviet capital. Owing to this blunt opposition, Balgunov's proposal proved abortive. Now I saw him once more, holding the important post of Chief of the Press Department of the Narcomindel (The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs).

Balgunov showed no trace of surprise nor the faintest shadow of annoyance at seeing me. Evidently he had been prepared for our meeting. He greeted me like an old friend, and congratulated me on coming to Moscow, telling me that he placed himself unreservedly at my service in whatever capacity I might need his help. He approved of the selection of Maria Leschinskaja as my translator. The Soviet Government had created a small legion of women interpreters—and very efficient and intelligent women they are—for the service of foreigners. When, three months later, I had to change my hotel for a brief spell and go to the National, I found there a manageress who knew Italian thoroughly.

Our Ambassador in Moscow was Rosso, who had married an American woman. Rosso is one of those rare diplomats, a half-score of whom, at the very least, a nation would need in order to be fittingly represented throughout the world. Most emphatically he is the most able, the most up-to-date and the most reasonable of all the Ambassadors I have ever met. His labors to secure a *rapprochement* between Italy and the Soviet Union have been more than marvellous, and if the fruits of those labors sometimes failed to ripen, it is not he but the Palazzo Chigi that was to

blame. He was the successor in Moscow to Attolico—Attolico who had bored the Soviet Government with his eternal complaints and fault-findings, his petulant demands—for which they generously made allowance—because his wife gave birth to an infant in the Russian capital. Rosso, on the other hand, was a gentleman and a man of poise. He was highly esteemed in diplomatic circles, and Steinhardt, the United States Ambassador, often gave banquets at which he and his fascinating wife were guests of honor. All the officials in our embassy knew English perfectly, as at one time or another they had been stationed in London or Washington.

The embassy was situated in the Wesnina Ulica, which ran at right angles to the Arbat. Every morning as I was on my way to see Rosso I used to pass the car which, coming from the Kremlin at high speed, took Stalin to his home outside the ramparts. It was the custom of Stalin, Molotov, and all the other Soviet chiefs, to work all night until morning. The palace which housed the Italian embassy had been built by an architect in the employment of the Czar; it had seen a tragic event within its walls in the revolutionary era, when Count Mirbach, the German Ambassador, was killed by extremists.

Once I had settled down in Moscow my work fell into three daily tasks—getting the newspapers translated carefully for me, exploring the city, and getting in touch with my older and more experienced colleagues. Shapiro's help was invaluable. I recall with emotion the pictures he used to conjure up of the enigmas of Russian life. He had been in the Union fifteen years, and was the only one of us who could speak Russian really well. Next came Henry Cassidy of the Associated Press, straight from Paris. The representatives of the German press were fairly numerous, and tried to boss the rest of us. The Poetzgen couple, however, with

the husband representing the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and his wife the *National Zeitung*, each paper having a separate room, were very helpful in giving me any information they could. Sometimes they gave me hints in advance about impending events. Poetzgen was invariably courteous, I must admit, and his wife Gisela would often thrill us with the charming recital of her own poems. At that time my German colleagues enjoyed the privilege, denied to all other newspaper representatives, of being able to telephone their messages direct to their head offices without any previous censorship. On the other hand, American, English and French journalists had to hand over their despatches to the censorship office of the Narcomindel. At first I had to follow this routine also, but realizing that there was no use in this delay, since my telegrams reached Rome after the despatches of the D.N.B. had been transmitted, I told Balgunov that the authorities ought to allow me the same privilege as the Germans enjoyed of telephoning my messages direct, at least to our Stefani office in Berlin, so that they might re-wire it to Rome. In this way, I pointed out, I should get my messages to Rome six or seven hours earlier. Balgunov did not reply at once, but after some delay my request was granted, though only on condition that similar facilities should be granted to the representative of the Tass Agency in Rome. I do not believe that the Soviets had at heart any great interest in establishing a telephonic service for Tass in the Italian capital, but the stipulation was made for reasons of prestige. I telegraphed to Morgagni and to the Ministry of Culture urging them to accept this condition of a reciprocal arrangement. I know that the Ministry sent for the Tass correspondent and informed him of the agreement that henceforth he could communicate with Moscow without any check by the censor. The journalist must have been amazed at such unexpected generous treatment. The

important point is that before Christmas I was able to inaugurate the new system, and thereafter the wheels ran perfectly smoothly.

Maria Leschinskaja was a perfect colleague. She translated into English *Pravda*, *Isvetia*, *Komsomolskaja Pravda* and other newspapers which she had to buy early every morning, because notwithstanding their circulation of over 1,000,000 apiece (*Pravda* printed 2,500,000 copies) they were all gone in a few minutes. The endless queues of people in front of the newspaper kiosks formed a most extraordinary spectacle. Maria Leschinskaja was initiated by me into the craft of journalism, but alas, she was not able to impart to me in return a knowledge of the Russian tongue which I would have liked to have. I was barely able to acquire a knowledge of the most essential elementary things and only began to feel my way in deciphering inscriptions. But while I was trying to learn Russian, my colleague picked up Italian with an ease, an alertness and a speed that were truly amazing.

The Moscow newspapers were not impressive, consisting of from four to six pages, according to the day. I was constantly but vainly searching for any repercussion of the war in Europe. I never saw any comment on it, except when Jugoslavia was attacked, on which occasion the Soviet press could not restrain itself and made some scathing remarks on the imperialism of the capitalistic powers which oppressed small undefended nations. With this exception, the echo of the European conflict was confined to a résumé of the German, British, Italian or Greek official bulletins, reported objectively on the last column of the last page in a sequence that changed from day to day in order to show strict impartiality.

The first three pages of each paper consisted of short articles with discussions on domestic politics. Pride of place

was given to Stakhanovism. All this seemed to us then to be just Bolshevik propaganda, whereas today we see that Russia has saved herself in this war through Stakhanovism. When the second Five Year Plan was completed, Stalin pressed into service "comrade worker Stakhanov" to rally the people of the Soviet Union to increase their production a hundred-fold through the intensified application of every individual worker whether agricultural or industrial. For over five years, right up to the war, miners, collective farmers and factories underwent a tremendous strain. Production, production—nothing mattered but production. It seemed an obsession, production was verging on madness. Indeed this Stakhanovism was an irritating and monotonous feature, which often left us incredulous. For instance, *Pravda* upheld to public admiration a certain workman who had succeeded in producing an output of 450 per cent over that of his comrades. This, though we knew it not, was, according to *Pravda*, a very serious and important phenomenon. In connection with this problem of production *Pravda* used to break out into ferocious articles against one commissar or another. Now it was in the field of iron metallurgy, now in that of mining, or of industry. *Pravda* was always detecting deficiencies, and laid responsibility for them on the shoulders of the officials in charge of the particular branches. If one of those uncompromising articles of criticism appeared in the official organ of the Party, on the following day all those at the head of the industrial concern in question, and often, too, the commissar as well as all his colleagues were dismissed. If for instance, in the Kolkholz, which comprised collective agricultural organizations—a compromise between the big factory and an agrarian collegium—any slackness had been detected, if a hiatus in productive rhythm had been observed, the leaders of the Kolkholz were dismissed, if not actually deported to Si-

beria. To remain in his job everybody had to give service to the maximum limit that was humanly possible.

The people of the Soviet Union had been trained to regard work as a religion. Women played their part in this religion of work, and by the beginning of 1936, out of the total number of workers in Moscow fifty-four per cent were women. It was on this account that Stalin allowed women to have the same rights as men in all the fields of national, economic, administrative, cultural, social and political activity.

In the spring of 1939, Moscow alone had more than 2,500 great industrial enterprises, with a system that was completely American. Production figures leaped dizzily. The second economic plan, which was more far-reaching than the first, had produced formidable results, but those results were a secret which could not be revealed. Neither bulletin nor statistics were ever published.

Now and then I discussed this feverish zest for work with Maria Leschinskaja, and compared it with the war that was rumbling outside the frontiers of Russia. I would turn on the radio and get my colleague to listen to the balance-sheets of war. Those were the days of The Battle of Britain, when Germany thought by furious bombardment to crush the English. Wherever Germany turned she could not help winning; the British alone she could not succeed in frightening, and Hitler had not the courage to order an invasion of England.

Maria Leschinkaja, like all Russians, used to talk about the real Russia. "Look at the fruit of the madness of capitalism," she often remarked. "Capitalism is the struggle for the confiscation of the wealth of others. Capitalism means war, bloodshed, the execution of the working class and of the proletariat."

"On the other hand," she went on, in a proud and im-

passioned tone, "Russia under her father, Stalin, lives in perfect peace, and is marching onwards. Russia is an island of peace in the midst of a world of madmen."

I looked at Maria Leschinskaja, and asked her, "But don't you think that you too will one day be involved in the great conflict?"

"We? Why should we? Stalin will not let himself be infected by the madness of others. If others were to do this, it would be for the ruin of Russia, which is rich in natural resources; but what Stalin wants is the happiness of the Russian proletariat."

"Quite so. But cannot developments be anticipated?"

"Decidedly no. It is sufficient to be on our guard. Owing to this reason our press is the most impartial in the whole world."

"Now listen to me. The moment will come when you will find Germany facing you with a number of claims. Hitler has an eye on your oil fields."

"No, that would be an abominable idea. We have helped Germany. We have concluded with her a most far-reaching and important commercial treaty."

"For all that——"

"Well, it is for this reason that we do not lead lives of idleness, and that we are toiling to be ready for every emergency."

Indeed, as far as I could see, all the frontiers were well guarded. Although there was no Stalin Line, nor a Voroshilov Line, nor a Timoshenko Line like the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line in the West, nevertheless they toiled to prepare a secure defense by sending troops to the West to the occupied regions in Poland, and in the north to the Soviet Republics in the Baltic. That winter Timoshenko took a precaution that Hitler failed to counter on his side, even though he was then planning an attack on Russia.

Timoshenko gave orders for regional skiing marches. Every province had to send all its available young people of the Komsomol, the Kolkholz, and the Syndicates across the snowy steppes to undertake long and arduous collective marches. During the course of a whole winter month, when it was very many degrees below zero, millions of organized young men, burdened with heavy equipment, defied the torments of the Siberian winter climate. Simultaneously the Russian army underwent field exercises.

In the meantime, it should be said, the Soviet Government studied every means for living on good terms with Germany. The German Ambassador, Count von der Schulenburg, was a very frequent caller on Molotov. He certainly saw him more frequently than did the American and British Ambassadors. In January a new commercial treaty was concluded, more extensive than the previous ones, the successful conclusion of which made the Germans very elated, for it ensured to Germany the fruits of an abundant Ukraine harvest as well as petroleum and mining products of all kinds, especially of manganese in return for German machine tools. Germany was the only country that had commercial representatives in Moscow and throughout the rest of the U.S.S.R. The hotels of the capital were packed with the delegates of German commercial commissions, who were in reality the agents of German economic espionage. The representative of the I. G. Farben, the leading German chemical company, had taken quarters in the Metropole, and was taking lessons in Russian. Another emissary from Berlin, an oil agent, made extraordinary statements to me in the evenings, when he was full of alcohol. Germany, he claimed, had a right to her own share of the products of the oil wells of Baku, because these wells had been constructed by German engineers.

On the anniversary of the Revolution I watched the re-

view on the Red Square from the island reserved for the diplomatic corps. The army, navy, and Red air arm were represented in the procession that paraded before us. As they passed before Lenin's Mausoleum they raised their hands to the peaks of their caps in salute. Their magnificent bearing compared very favorably with that of the most up-to-date of European armies. I noticed large numbers of parachute divisions. Mammoth tanks rumbled with a great clatter of machinery over the macadamized surface of the Square. Squadrons of planes in geometrical patterns darkened the sky. I asked our military attaché what he thought of it all. He said that he thought that since Timoshenko had been made Commissar of War, Russia had made tremendous progress in armaments and in military instruction. Nobody, however, had been allowed to visit the great arms factories of which there were a dozen round Moscow—the Stalin factory, the Serp Molot factory, those of the Krasny Proletarians, etc. The military attaché was of the opinion that the Russians showed less than they actually possessed.

I saw Stalin in the group of Commissars in the Government box, with the aged Kalinin, the President of the Union, Voroshilov, Molotov, Beriya, Mikoyan, and Kaganovich.

But at the moment all my attention was centered on Stalin. I tried to make a study of this man with the good-natured peasant face who had been able to make one single federation of eleven republics of widely different races and utterly dissimilar in language. Stalin is the Georgian who, thirty years ago, was unable so much as to speak Russian, and who had never even seen the Russian printing characters. There is the same difference between Russian handwriting and Georgian—which looks like Arabic script written with a trembling hand—as there is between Etruscan and Greek writing. Now, a population of nearly 150,000,000

souls was compactly united, like a block of granite, under the guidance of this son of Caucasian soil, with the face of a peasant. Adopting the doctrine of Marx and Lenin, he had solved the age-old problem of welding together under his sole control heterogeneous races—the Slavs of White Russia, Ukrainian peasants, artisans of Arzebeijan, Armenian traders, Kurdish highwaymen, and Mongolian shepherds. Stalin held sway from the Arctic to the mountains of Persia, and from the frontiers of Central Europe to the Pacific. They obeyed him and also loved him.

It was worth while investigating this as well as the mystery of the authority exercised by Stalin without need of the slightest force. I got a ticket to attend the meeting of the Congress of the Nationalities, which is a general assembly of the Union. The meeting was presided over by Kalinin; Stalin was in the second row of the Statesmen. One orator succeeded another on the stage of the hall, each of them representing his own particular state. With the aid of the shorthand reports I succeeded in following to the best of my limited ability the evolution of the debate. The themes on which the speakers insisted were the solidarity and discipline of the proletariat, their labors in the interests of the Soviet Union, and their struggle against capitalism. Each speech ended with a hymn to Stalin to which he listened sitting there absolutely immobile. The strangest feature of the meeting was that the audience consisted of delegates, both men and women, from the whole Union. It was obvious that there was great variety of languages and dialects employed by the speakers, for when any individual speaker arose, they were not all able to follow him. The men had caps on their heads and were often reading papers, the women were knitting.

I became more and more accustomed to the life of Mos-

cow. The great cold I must confess, did not arouse in me a great desire to go out, but I had nevertheless to go every morning to the embassy to have my short conversation with the Ambassador on the news of the day, and occasionally to have a short chat with Signor Mascia, our legal attaché.

On October 28, Italy declared war on Greece, though the campaign went badly. Instead of going ahead, the Italians were held up and even forced to fall back. It is not pleasant, when you are living far away from your native land, to have to follow on the radio the reverses inflicted on your own country. Consequently we in Moscow had a feeling that we were daily treading on thorns during the Italian campaign against the Greeks. In the embassy this was the main theme of discussion—this and the mutual aerial bombardments of the Germans and the British. Apart from this there was not much to do, as Russian politics offered no incidents of sufficient interest to be worth recording.

Nearly every evening we went to the theatre which was the chief source of amusement in Moscow. There were forty-seven theatres from which to choose, all very expensive, with first-rate programs and starring artists of worldwide repute. It is hard to realize what the Russian theatre is like. It is an ever-flowing spring of new emotions. Whether one went to hear a drama of Chekhov staged by Nemirovski at the Kamerny Theatre, or to attend a work of Tchaikovsky in the vast Lyric, or to hear Tiroff in the latest production of Alexei Tolstoi, or to the Jewish Theatre to hear *King Lear*, it was impossible not to admit that both the dramatic and lyrical arts had attained under the Soviet regime the highest level recorded in the experience of the theatre. I had the privilege of hearing a rendering of *La Locandiera* which will forever be impressed on my memory. In those days plays based on the French novels of the last century began to appear on the Russian stage. For instance

there was a *Eugenie Grandet* and a *Madame Bovary* presented with very original and excellently developed artistic settings. Those present on both occasions comprised a proletarian audience which followed the development of the theme with the closest attention, and showed an intimate knowledge of the theatre.

One evening in the Metropole I made the acquaintance of an ex-colonel of the Russian army decorated with many medals. Like myself, he was watching a troupe of gypsy dancers giving a performance in the hotel lounge. He had been in Italy, and spoke of my country with great feeling. He mentioned that he had heard Mussolini speaking in the Piazza del Duomo, in Milan, and said with an air of conviction, "My friend, I am a Bolshevik, but mark my words. This man will never be a dictator—not even if he wants to be one. It takes a cynic to make a dictator, whereas your Mussolini is an actor."

Another interesting acquaintance was the agent of the G.P.U. who kept dogging my footsteps. As I was leaving the hotel one day we came face to face, and his eyes met mine, perhaps because he observed a slight touch of curiosity in my expression. His next move was a breach of the code prescribed for him by his superiors—he asked me in the most courteous manner if I was pleased to be in Moscow. There was no need for any mutual introductions. Custom had already made us familiar to one another. I replied that Moscow would please me more if it were a little less cold. We continued our conversation walking side by side across Revolution Square and along other streets until we arrived at the Arbat.

"I fancy that you are aware that I belong to the G.P.U.," he said at length, after a brief exchange of commonplaces.

"Well, that is pretty obvious—isn't it?"

"But you are not the first man whom I have shadowed."

"I can well believe that what you say is true."

"What I mean to say is, that I have had to shadow other foreigners."

"Well?"

"But you are the first Italian I have had to deal with. Most of them were Germans. People who give one a lot of trouble."

"Trouble! In what way?"

"They know that they are under our observation, and take advantage of it, as though we were more than detectives—as though we were their protectors. Do you know what they do? Some of them, on leaving the hotel, look round the foyer, and refuse to put their noses outside the door, unless they are sure that we are following close at their heels. On one occasion I had left one of them for a little while to go to another part of the hotel. This German, to whom I had been assigned, instituted a hunt when he could not see me. When I turned up, he got very angry, and stated that he urgently needed to go somewhere or other, and that I must know that it was my duty to follow him, for he would not wait for my convenience. Anyone would have thought it was an officer speaking to a soldier. Even my own superior in the G.P.U. would not have been so overbearing. A taxi was waiting for him outside, but he would not get into it until I, feeling rather confused, had opened the door for him."

I struck up a kind of friendship with this man, the most courteous of all the detectives I have ever met. When he was on duty outside my room I used to call him inside, and give him something to warm him, either a cup of tea or a glass of whiskey. To show his thanks, he started placing my papers outside my door every morning. When Maria Leschinskaja arrived as usual, he used to greet her as though she were a queen. I found both of them very touching in

their little acts of attention to me—the G.P.U. man with his attitude suggestive of a faithful dog, and my secretary-translator who brought me bunches of mimosa half wilting with frost, because she knew that I liked flowers in my room.

In the second half of November Molotov went to Berlin to return Ribbentrop's visit of 1939. The Germans gave great importance to this visit, because they were anxious to neutralize the impression created by the electoral campaign in the United States, which was proceeding very favorably for Roosevelt who was thoroughly detested in Germany.

Immediately after Christmas, Rome, which was all the time very much preoccupied with Greece, began to woo Moscow by wiring to Rosso to take the initiative in steps to bring about a commercial treaty. Italy had been the first European power to recognize the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics after the Bolshevik revolution, yet she was now the only one on the continent who did not enjoy any commercial advantages. Rosso went to Molotov with the wishes of the Italian Government, and Molotov courteously informed him that the Government of the Soviet Union would be very glad to conclude an economic agreement if some issues in the political sphere were previously clarified. Moscow desired to know particularly Rome's attitude with regard to various Balkan problems, above all with regard to the Dardanelles. This last issue constituted a very delicate problem, because, as is well known, the U.S.S.R. demanded back her right to go through the Straits. Molotov had made the same demand to Berlin, but Berlin parried the question by declaring that it was one which concerned Italy more than Germany.

The reply from the Soviet Government did not seem so formidable that Rosso gave up all hope. He made a report to Ciano of his conversation with Molotov, adding a sug-

gestion on his own account that a questionnaire should be submitted to the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, with a view to keeping negotiations open. For over two months no further sign of life came from Rome. Rosso made enquiries and learned that the whole dossier, including his own suggestions, had been sent by Ciano to Berlin for consideration, but that the dossier had never been returned. That was why Ciano was unable to reply to Molotov.

In the beginning of March I had to go on personal business to Berlin, and Signor Rosso entrusted me with the task of speaking to Alfieri of his efforts, and of begging him to request the Wilhelmstrasse to define its attitude with regard to the question.

It only took a few minutes' conversation with Alfieri to realize that the document was lying forgotten in a pigeon-hole in Ribbentrop's office, and that he had no intention of rescuing it from its oblivion. Alfieri promised, however, to speak about it to the German Minister of Foreign Affairs. But even this did not make Ribbentrop release the important dossier. Alfieri told me to ask Rosso to have patience, as a new meeting between Hitler and Mussolini at the Brenner Pass was imminent, and the whole question would undoubtedly come under discussion at that meeting. Thus it turned out that right up to the outbreak of war with Russia, Italy remained the only country that could neither export goods to nor import them from the Soviet Union, and that simply because the German Government did not want it. From Russia Italy would have been able to get, in return for half-finished products, the metals needed for her war industries, manganese, asbestos, tungsten, and so on, but Italy was in the train of Germany, and Germany was determined to serve herself first, at her own absolute discretion.

This time, when I was in Berlin, I heard rumors among

the people for which I was not at all prepared, rumors which I considered as absolutely unfounded—of an imminent conflict between Germany and Russia. It struck me that the political atmosphere seemed incompatible with the menace of such an eventuality. The tone of the relations between Berlin and Moscow was of such a nature that it seemed to preclude all motives for a war. When the Japanese minister of Foreign Affairs, Matsuoko, passed through Moscow on the return from his visit to Berlin, among the notables who were at the station to greet him was Stalin, who during the few minutes while he was waiting for the arrival of the train, approached the German military attaché, and taking his arm, said to him, "My dear friend, our two countries get along together wonderfully—don't you think so?" The extreme courtesy of this gesture had led the representatives of the German press to devote whole columns to emphasizing the closeness of the Germano-Soviet friendship. After this, Dekanosov, formerly a vice-commissar, a man of very great influence, was sent as Ambassador of the Soviets to Berlin. Why, after all this, should there be a war? Well, the line of reasoning which the people of Berlin followed on the question was that Hitler needed the Ukraine and the Caucasus for supplies. Russia would decidedly not give him those territories; therefore, he would have to seize them. The contention was so absurd that I regarded it just as mass hyperbole. Remember, this was in March, barely three months before the conflict.

On my return to Moscow, I related what I had heard. There were lengthy discussions on the subject, even among the German residents in Moscow, but everybody expressed the view that it was merely a foolish alarm generated by the nervous excitement of Berliners, who were obliged to lead the hellish existence of an almost nightly recurrence of aerial attacks.

Maria Leschinskaja, the ex-colonel of the Russian Army, and my friend the G.P.U. agent, when they heard these rumors going the rounds, were just a trifle alarmed. However, as nothing happened, and, as the Moscow press continued to take no notice of the war, we ceased to talk about the subject.

Towards the end of April I fell ill. Maria Leschinskaja and the manageress of my floor in the hotel did all they could to help me. I was attended by the doctor sent to me by Burobin, and a change of air was prescribed. He was in favor of sending me to the Crimea, but I decided to ask the Stefani Agency to transfer me to Rome. I had been in Moscow for eight months, and had the climate not been so inclement in winter and so oppressive in summer, I would gladly have remained there for another couple of years. I had not made many friends in Russia, but the few I had I liked. Balgunov looked sad when I told him that I was going. Rosso and the other members of the embassy cheered me with their kindly words. Rosso actually wrote to the Ministry, explaining why I left Moscow, and his remarks were indeed flattering. I regretted parting with Shapiro, who had been a good colleague. I was sorry to have to leave Russia with its fascinating problems. Russia has so many strange and mysterious facets, some of which I had observed; the greatest and most inexplicable mystery was, and still is, this harmonious blending of such an enormous number of individuals so that they form only one soul, swayed and impelled by a single driving force.

I instituted a comparison in my mind between the three dictatorships. A Bolshevik, which had already lasted for twenty-three years, a Fascist, which had not reached its twentieth year as yet, and a Nazi with only eight years behind it. Of the three, the only one that had actually created a really new generation was the Bolshevik. It was the only

one that had succeeded in permeating the atmosphere of the nation; the others had many aspirations, but had achieved no tangible results. Today, the only one of the three regimes that has unwaveringly held its ground, that has created the miracle of Stalingrad, and will reach its goal—the end of the war—unscathed, is the Soviet.

I left for Italy on May 31, which was my birthday. Three weeks after my departure, another war front, the Eastern, had developed in Europe. The views of the Berlin mob had proved prophetic.

The insane crime which Hitler perpetrated in unleashing a war upon the Soviet Union will never be explained. Even Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, when discussing the matter with a colleague, declared: "Ich halte es für einen Irrtum" ("I think it was a mistake"). Russia had done nothing to provoke Germany. As in the case of Poland, Norway, Belgium, France and Jugoslavia, the provocation had come from Berlin, and it had been premeditated. The Nazi contention that Bolshevism was preparing to invade Europe was false, but even granting that Soviet Bolshevism was contemplating such a plan, it would have had to wait for a long time before putting it into operation. In that summer of 1941 Europe was not so enfeebled that it could become a prey to Bolshevism.

But in 1941 Stalin's Russia was very far from dreaming of a war, as all those who had been in that country then can confidently assert. Russia had barely limited herself to the taking of precautionary steps. In her inmost soul she was afraid of Germany, because Germany was a dangerous and an uneasy neighbor. Germany had become a colossus that could not be challenged lightly, unless there was a sea between her and her enemy, as in the case of Great Britain. Without the support of a solid coalition, Russia would not have been able to take the field against such a colossus, and

in the summer of 1941 she had no such coalition. It was Hitler, in my opinion, who revealed to Soviet Russia her actual strength by the war which he let loose on her. The military potentiality of the Russians was discovered by the Russians themselves in their life-and-death struggle, when, marshalling all their energy, they succeeded, first in halting, and later in repelling the enemy. In coping with the danger, Stalin's Russia acquired a knowledge of her strength, and that knowledge she owed to the head of Nazi Germany. In affirming that he wanted to be the savior of the continent from the menace of Bolshevism, Hitler enabled Bolshevism to march victoriously towards the West.

Hitler allowed himself to be deluded by the hope of gaining great and sweeping results by a surprise attack. It is impossible that he should not have reflected on the vastness of the territory which he would have to overrun with his war-machines. Russia is not Norway—neither is it France. For thousands and thousands of miles it stretches astride two continents—a vast region traversed by the mightiest rivers in Europe. Nature was all against such an undertaking. For once Hitler indulged in a dream like the dream of Icarus. He banked solely on one possibility, and that was that Stalin's regime might collapse at the first blow.



## IX. THE RETURN OF THE ARGONAUT

WHEN I LISTENED IN DAILY FROM MOSCOW, I FOLLOWED with breathless anxiety the developments of our campaign in Greece. I had no idea of what a tragedy was being enacted. Fortunately for Italy, at the very last moment a remedy was found, as otherwise who can say in what a catastrophe the "great enterprise" would have ended.

I have already pointed out how Mussolini felt dissatisfied and frustrated after Italy's insignificant share in the war against France. When Hitler forbade Italy to occupy Corsica and Tunis, the Duce felt like a dethroned King, he realized that he had lost prestige. He was tormented by envy at the sight of Hitler with his colossal spoils of war and his gigantic power in Europe, while all that Italy had been able to secure were certain narrow strips of territory from the French Riviera to Modane. The German soldier in the occupied territories had every right to be proud of his own conquests; he could stroll about as a conqueror in the Bois de Boulogne, where he was regarded with timid respect by the subject people. On the other hand the Italian soldier in Modane, in Antibes and in the villages of Savoy, who was called upon for garrison duty alongside the Ger-

man soldier, was boycotted by the French, inasmuch as he did not represent actual power in their eyes.

Mussolini tried to secure for himself some successes in Africa, seeing that he could do nothing better. In obedience to his orders Marshal Graziani succeeded in breaking through the Egyptian frontiers and driving on past them with his army, in a thrust that gave hopes of a successful advance to Alexandria. Graziani's blow kept alive for a spell the waning ardor of the Fascist jingoes, who claimed that he had performed a miracle. Mussolini reckoned that by the occupation of Egypt he would make up for what he had previously been obliged to forego in accordance with the desire of his ally. But his hopes proved illusory. Graziani could not keep up his advance, because the army had no water. An aqueduct had to be constructed regardless of cost along the coast to the foremost of the occupied regions, as otherwise it would have been impossible to drive forward in the direction of the course of the Nile and the heart of Egypt. Before the aqueduct was finished, the English under Wavell started a counter-attack.

All these military actions had the stamp of improvisation. Mussolini had neglected details of organization. For instance, he should have known that in the desert it was impossible to advance against a powerful enemy without any tanks whatever, and with an army that lacked water supplies. He himself was the supreme director of operations, with the negligible co-operation of Cavallero, his Under-secretary of War. The General Staff were not consulted. A dilettante in this domain as in all others, Mussolini had never given a thought to organization, which is the most essential prerequisite for all military enterprise.

The consequence was that by the middle of October, 1940, Italy was paralyzed along the various war sectors, partly as the result of political pacts, partly owing to the

difficulties of terrain, and partly owing to the stubborn resistance of the enemy. The participation of Italy in the war was still utterly unproductive of results.

This then was the genesis of Mussolini's sudden interest in Greece earlier in the war and the circumstances which led to his premeditated attack on that country. But there was no lack of people who took steps to fan the spark into a blaze. General Visconti Prasca, the commander of our military garrison in Albania, was subsequently accused of having sent false reports about the defensive preparations of the Greeks. But Ciano, the Cabinet Minister, and Jacomini, the Governor of Albania, who regarded this territory as their own dominion and their own private preserve, the annexation of which to Italy had been their work for the most part, strove to assure Mussolini that the campaign against Greece would be an extremely easy one. Jacomini said that he had bribed two generals of the Greek army who assured him that in the event of an attack by Italy no resistance would be offered. In the Roman Government offices it was said that Metaxas had fallen in with this arrangement, whereas the idea never so much as occurred to him.

The result of the inquiry set on foot by Mussolini about the possibility of an action in which Greece would lose, gave rise to a wave of optimism in official Roman circles. If it were true that a section of the Greek army would not fight and that Greek armaments were of an inferior type, then instead of going to war the whole campaign would be a picnic. When arranging the tactical plan for the offensive, Cavallero did not exceed what was considered the maximum of five assault divisions.

But the actual situation was different. The Greeks were resolved to defend their own land. None of their generals showed the faintest indication that he wished to go over to

the Italian side, either alone or with his troops. On the contrary, the Greeks without exception fought with the desperation and courage that are inspired by a fight for independence. Visconti Prasca was recalled immediately, and Jacomini, the Governor, followed him soon after.

Hostilities began on October 29, 1940. Our most advanced positions were held by the Julia and Bari divisions, which, after crossing the river Kalamas, were about to thrust forward some miles into Greek territory as far as Mezzovo. This was on the first day of the attack, when they were able to take advantage of the surprise of the enemy. But after two days the Italians realized what an enormous mistake they had made in thinking that the campaign would be extremely easy. The Greek army not only fought fiercely, but consisted of twenty-nine complete divisions, while their Italian assailants had only five. Furthermore, the Greek war material was very modern, and was almost all of foreign manufacture, having been bought in England, in America and even in Germany. The Greek infantry had been given American machine-guns of the latest pattern. As had been the case with the Abyssinians, so it was now with the Greeks, the Italians found themselves confronted with guns made in the Krupp factories. If the Greek armaments showed any defect it was in the supplies of shells, many of which were duds; furthermore the commissariat in the early phase of the struggle was somewhat deficient. But, apart from these drawbacks, the Greek army was homogeneous, disciplined and prepared.

Under a torrential downpour, which made quagmires of the already very bad mountain roads, the Italians had to fall back after their first contact with the enemy. The Greeks were following three routes, one seaward in the direction of Valona where they could make a stout stand, one in the middle of the battle-front, in the valley of Vojussa, where

Greek forces reached Tepelini in Albania, and another on the summit of Corizza, in the most mountainous part of the region. Instead of our threatening the enemy, it was the enemy who advanced into territory that belonged to the Italians. The situation was one of utter confusion. Had it not been for her infantry, Italy would have been exposed to the menace of a Greek invasion.

The Italian divisions held their ground desperately, facing as best they could the onset of absolutely superior forces. The enemy profited by their advantageous position to improve steadily their own organization, while they remedied the shortage of provisions and other drawbacks. It was the courage of the Italian soldiers that saved Albania which, by the end of November, might have perished irretrievably. But the Greeks made the most of their advantage, and showed that they did not want to let it slip from their hands. Their dash was reminiscent of the Greek insurrections which went on through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They seemed possessed by the warrior spirit of their ancient forebears.

And what about our Italian men? They had almost all been mobilized at the very last moment in the army and the Fascist militia, some of them belonging to both organizations. They had not been prepared even morally for this ordeal. One fine day they had embarked at Brindisi and Bari, amid an appalling muddle of orders and counter-orders. They were told that they were going to occupy Greece, but not to fight. They had not been provided with change of clothing, and what they were wearing, although new, was of the worst quality. The issuing of clothes at the mobilization centers had been carried out in a very slipshod manner. Soldiers were seen with tunics and breeches that did not match and were made of different fabrics, and the quartermasters had neglected to supply every soldier with

his complete equipment. Their boots were soaked and worthless in the downpour which greeted them on their arrival in Greece.

The fate which was to befall the Germans after their first offensive in Russia overtook the Italians in the Greek campaign. The High Command had not reckoned upon fighting in winter, for Mussolini had assured them that the military operations would be of very brief duration. All the consequences of this tragic lack of foresight in face of the rigors of winter had therefore to be endured. The men were short of overcoats, and even of anti-frostbite ointment—a thing which was very urgently needed. Snow fell early in the mountains of Albania, and the hospitals began to fill. Hundreds of amputations had to be made. Then an epidemic of typhus began to spread like wildfire.

So great was the general disorganization that it frequently happened that a section of a battalion was already in Albania while its baggage, along with the transport mules and the equipment for the men, were still in Bari, waiting to be shipped. And all this time the enemy were drawing nearer and nearer to Argiroastro. The greater part of the mobilized divisions lacked the necessary means of transport. It was mountain warfare that was being waged, with roads none of which could be negotiated by motor vehicles; without the mules and the battalion carts the divisions were, so to speak, unable to move. Some of these military roads consisted merely of tracks, usable only by rickety Albanian handcarts. Consequently, it was impossible to send in advance motor transport of any type. The guns had to be taken to pieces before being despatched to the frontline, and it was a stroke of luck that the Skoda gun-carriage had been reconditioned in time. But there were howitzers and mortars that were unusable simply owing to shortage of ammunition. A hopelessly inadequate issue of fifty rounds

for every gun had been made, but the gunners could not always be sure even of this.

An army constantly falling back is always in a state of psychological and moral inferiority. The roles in Greece had been completely reversed. The attacking Italians found that they were being attacked. There was a corresponding inevitable change in the spirits of the troops. They were discouraged, and lack of discipline inevitably ensued. In these circumstances the soldier's attitude underwent a change; they began to lose confidence in their officers.

Our men began to grumble that the apparent failure of the campaign was all due to Mussolini. But it was not Mussolini alone that was cursed by the rank and file of the Julia and the other divisions—they also cursed everything connected with Fascism. Stories passed from mouth to mouth in the trenches about Fascist hierarchs who were steadily filling their pockets and waxing fat on the profits secured by the suffering caused by a badly-planned war, the purpose of which nobody understood. The men pretended not to notice when they were visited at the front by Ciano and Starace, the Secretary of the Party, by the Minister of Corporations, by Ricci, the former head of the Fascist Youth, and by Teruzzi, the Commander of the Militia. Having taken note of the chilly reception with which they were greeted, those bigwigs did not repeat their visits. The men, incidentally, had observed that some of the Fascist leaders indulged in large-scale speculations by buying at Bari cases of mouldy and putrid preserves in order to sell them as food for the mobilized army. Other speculators made deals in woolen blankets for the troops. Anybody staying in Rome could see countless instances of the corruption of the Party hierarchs.

For all these reasons those Blackshirts who took part in the campaign were detested by their comrades and held up

to general ridicule, because they represented the Party—the cause of all the trouble. The men of the Blackshirt battalions were contemptuously referred to as “the chimney-sweepers,” on account of the black shirts which they wore under their grey-green uniforms. The ordinary soldiers who had been called up for service, saw in them the pampered sons of the detested Party, which was bringing the country to ruin. These feelings were rendered still more embittered when it was observed that in every regiment there were Fascists affiliated with the Ovra—the secret police. Sometimes the Ovra official was a sergeant or a corporal, and everybody knew that he was there to spy on the attitude of officers and soldiers, listening to what was said and duly reporting it. But, as has always been the case where Ovra is concerned, those who ought to have been on their guard and apprehensive lest information should be lodged against them, did not trouble to take any precautions, and said whatever came into their minds, with utter indifference to the spies. The Ovra has never succeeded in making for itself that atmosphere of dreaded authority which envelops the G.P.U. in Russia and the Gestapo in Germany. Its agents did their work too openly and with such utter incompetence that they could be easily spotted. They were, one might say, comic-opera secret police. When he came upon a glaring case of “defeatism,” based on grumblings and protests against Fascism, one of these secret agents delivered this ultimatum to the delinquent: “When we return to Italy, I will denounce you!”

The hatred of the Blackshirts was not always justified. Even among them there were reservists and recruits who fought, and some of whom fell in battle. It happened sometimes that certain elements among the Fascist Militia joined the chorus of criticism and malediction of the

"hounds in the Government" who had proclaimed such an absurd war.

After 1940, that is, from the time when Mussolini decided to take part in the war, the Blackshirts was no longer a voluntary, but a compulsory form of service. In local Fascist circles the Party secretary received an order to urge as many of the members of the Party as possible to join the Militia. Many gave their names through fear, but it must not be thought that this was a proof of cowardice. The local Fascist administrator had, as a matter of fact, jurisdiction over the entire economic life of the city and imposed his will even on private concerns, arranging for dismissals and promotions and for the transference of people who were disliked, to make way for more favored individuals. These administrators could bring families to ruin. Their powers of coercion began with their right to force industrial concerns to contribute to the Fascist funds, as well as to compel all families to buy the Party almanac as a proof of their loyalty to Fascism.

So it was that, later on those who were actually called up as reservists to the Greek army began to realize that even their "chimney sweep" colleagues might consider themselves as poor devils who were victims of aggression and political blackmail. In this way a greater camaraderie evolved between the two groups.

In December Marshal Pietro Badoglio resigned his post as chief of the General Staff. He had been opposed to the Abyssinian War; he had likewise been opposed to meddling in Spain, as well as to this madcap campaign in Greece. In the depth of his soul he had been always anti-Fascist and had regarded Mussolini as a whimsical and dangerous amateur who would eventually bring Italy to a tragic end. For some years the General Staff existed only in name. It was an institution that could not be abolished, by reason of the

Constitution, but it continued to exist merely in order that every military decision made by the Duce might have the appearance of legality. The tactical plans were elaborated by the Government, and it was Mussolini who made final decisions. The Fabriguerra, that is to say, the central office for war production, which was under the control of General Favagrossa, ought logically to have had direct contact with the office of the chief of the General Staff, but actually it was under the absolute control of the Duce. No communications were any longer made to the General Staff with regard to military preparations, and anything that the General Staff succeeded in learning about such matters was the result of its own special enquiries. Mussolini knew that he had an opponent in Badoglio, and for this reason he always tried to shelve him by placing more pliable generals over him. In this way he gave to Graziani precedence during the operations in Libya, knowing his rivalry with Badoglio. The Italians tended more and more, as time went on, to talk of Pietro Badoglio as the man who personified anti-Fascist ideas, and one day would be able to rescue the country from the path to ruin along which Mussolini was leading it.

The Greeks had, meanwhile, consolidated their conquests in Albania by the occupation of Argirocastro and Corizza. It was feared that they might reach Valona and bring about a complete collapse of the Italian expedition. To avert this disaster our resistance in the sector bordering on the sea was intensified while awaiting the arrival of reinforcements.

Rumors went around that Hitler had offered his assistance and that Mussolini had declined to accept any help, at any rate until our troops had succeeded in regaining the ground they had lost as far as the frontiers of Albania. There is no proof whatsoever that such an offer was made. Mussolini had started this war on his own initiative, with

the intention that it should be an exclusive Italian enterprise, without any co-operation from his ally. He hoped thereby to restore to a certain degree equilibrium in the heart of the Axis, which had been interrupted by the fact that Germany had appropriated to herself all the glory and all the advantages accruing from the victory over France. The balance of the Axis needed a certain amount of readjusting, as it had tilted too much towards its German component. For this reason the campaign in Greece had been undertaken practically without the cognizance of Berlin, as the first communication relative to it was made to Hitler at a new meeting at the Brenner Pass, just as the Italian forces were starting for Greece.

This was the revenge Mussolini took for having been kept in the dark on several occasions by the Fuehrer when deliberations on grave issues were being held. With an enthusiasm and pride typically Italian when a decision has been arrived at to do something to enhance national prestige, Mussolini made the campaign in Greece his own special enterprise and the test of the ardor of Fascism. It can easily be realized that he did not desire to be regarded as one who, having committed a blunder, needs the intervention of others to help him out of it.

The first set-back which the Greeks suffered was when they started a new violent offensive by putting in the front line their Cretan divisions. In addition to Cretans, this comprised a large number of Greek intellectuals, who had volunteered, in the spirit in which Lord Byron volunteered, for the cause of Greek independence. The attack was launched in the middle of February, 1941, and found the Italians determined to die rather than yield any further ground. The attack was repulsed, and the Cretan division was literally mowed down. It was a very dramatic moment, for if the Greeks had succeeded in breaking our lines, they would

most certainly have driven on to Valona, and Albania would have been lost.

By a stroke of good luck for the Italians, after encountering countless difficulties and complications, reinforcements succeeded in getting in contact with the front-line. The weeks which followed this lucky Italian defensive action were uneventful and inactive. The war had developed into one of position owing to the special nature of the mountainous terrain and the intense cold that had set in.

On March 6 Mussolini turned up at the front to revive the drooping spirits of his soldiers. During the preparations for this visit the extent to which certain commanders had been guilty of doing little or nothing to facilitate the tasks of the troops was revealed. Wishing to give the Duce the impression that everything was done in accordance with regulations, and that there was no remissness to complain of, installations that had not existed until then were set up in the few days that preceded the arrival of the Duce, and a number of steps were taken to camouflage the fact that the men had been obliged to lead an existence full of privations and sufferings. Hospitals were erected, whole villages of military huts were run up, shelters were built for the ammunition which had hitherto been allowed to deteriorate in the damp weather, defective weapons were got rid of, and every soldier was trained to take up his post promptly and be ready to show the Duce that a fighting spirit and a splendid morale pervaded the front line. Those reservists who had made themselves obnoxious by their turbulent bearing, their grumbles and generally unorthodox attitude towards the regime, were removed from office and sent to prison for the time being.

It is hard to realize that even then there were some soldiers who had stuck up photographs of Mussolini on the walls behind their bunks, and prodded them with their own

bayonets. There were numerous instances of bitter dislike of Fascism and even of revolt against it, and these were so serious that they caused grave concern to commanding officers. The military censors had confiscated a number of letters sent by soldiers to their families in which the actual situation at the front was crudely portrayed and emphasized by expressions that were anything but respectful towards the regime and its head.

Did Mussolini learn about all this? Did he ever get to know the attitude of the soldiers whose blood he ordered to be shed to gratify his whim? It was nothing new that the general secretaries of the Party, the ministers and the presidents of the confederations, should habitually hide the truth from him. The great dictator was left severely alone. They let him enjoy his idyll with his Claretta, who actually even appointed and sacked the Duce's secretaries. In view of his mania for wanting to work in co-operation with Hitler, nobody dared to contradict him. The campaign in Greece might well be termed an expedition of Argonauts which had its origin in, and was maintained by, a colossal system of trickery.

Mussolini's visit to the front was rendered necessary because the ship of empire was leaking in all her joints. In Abyssinia the English had pushed their advance right up to Addis Ababa, and the Viceroy, the Duke of Aosta, had been forced to make a last desperate resistance in Eritrea. In the African desert the British under Wavell had started a counter-offensive, and on February 7 they had occupied Benghazi. Everything was going to rack and ruin. Nor did Italians succeed in advancing in Greece, in spite of the reinforcements that were sent; on the contrary they fell back there too. Mussolini believed that by his presence he could galvanize with new energy the weary and demoralized fighting troops. From the moment he acquired power he was

never able to rid himself of the illusion that he was adored by the humble and ignorant masses, the simple workers, the sons of the people. If he had seen the bayonets and daggers piercing his effigies in the soldiers' quarters, and the scrawls of "To hell with Mussolini!" on the walls, he would have been more reserved in forming his judgments.

Finally there came his famous speech—it was bound to come—urging the Italians to make a supreme effort to hurl the Greeks into the Hellespont. In this speech he pre-emptorily demanded a victory. The army would have to give of its best, and even more than its best. He would hold the generals responsible for failure to attain success. Yet barely a month before he delivered this speech eleven drunken Greek soldiers, who had turned up at our trenches in one sector in the front line with a view to surrendering, found our men so discouraged and in such a pessimistic mood that they thought that these eleven deserters had come to make an attack. When the Greeks said that they wanted to surrender, the Italian sentinels replied, "No! It is we who have had enough of this war!"

But the enemy were exhausted too. In some six months of heavy fighting during wintry weather they had done all they could and had called up the very last reserves. The help from the Allies which they had requested had come too late, at a crisis when the Greeks found that they had to fight against two enemies—the Italians on the Albanian front, and the Germans who, in April, came up from Thrace and Jugoslavia. The Greeks had entertained high hopes of help from Jugoslavia, but Jugoslavia collapsed before the German threat. Germany's war against Jugoslavia, which started on April 6, ended like a flash of lightning, showing once more that no obstacle was of any avail against the armed might of the Reich. Some days before Jugoslavia collapsed, Mussolini once again addressed the Ital-

ian people on the occasion of the anniversary of the establishment of the Fasci di Combattimento and declared, "Now comes the War!" At that precise moment the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Matsuoko, was making a round of visits to the capitals of the member states of the Tripartite Pact, and his arrival in Rome was imminent. The Italian people associated those two incidents in their minds, and with their inexhaustible sense of humor found sardonic amusement in the caustic epigram, "Now comes the War! Now comes Matsuoko!"

The general Italo-German attack was unleashed on the morning of April 12. The Greeks put up a strenuous defense, but were forced to fall back, this time with great precipitation, losing a great deal of their territory. In the last weeks of the war about 50,000 British troops came to their aid, but they were promptly engaged in battle with the Germans in the vicinity of Thermopylae, and were forced to embark at the Piræus, and make a final effort at resistance in the island of Crete.

On April 14 the Greek commander asked for an armistice, but he applied to the Germans, forgetting the Italians, as a final dramatic insult, exactly as France had done. Later on Greece was obliged to make a truce with us also. So ended a campaign which, according to Mussolini's expectation, should have added luster and glory to the great Italian Empire. Instead of this glorious culmination, there was nothing but a long series of painful and humiliating incidents which very nearly culminated in irreparable disaster. But the Italian soldier, although he was looked upon as a beast of burden and treated as one, and although he was dejected and exhausted, devoted himself with all his energy to the fulfilment of his duty, and his courage was as outstanding as it had always been in all previous and subsequent wars. He could not give more than he actually gave.

He found himself facing a determined and valiant enemy whom he did not hate.

Though not convinced of the righteousness of his cause, he fought with desperation for the honor of his country. Any definite successes obtained were due to the Italian soldier—not to Mussolini or to Fascism. While Fascism thought that it was proclaiming its own power to the world, and was attaining a success that was due to itself, in the long run it had to fall back on its ally, Germany, and thereby prove its own organic weakness. The bankruptcy of Fascism was revealed on the battle-fields of Greece.

Fascism did not even succeed in developing a moral mobilization in the country in connection with the war in Greece. Throughout Italy the people looked on this adventure in Greece as a comic affair, starting with its not very brilliant opening and the ridiculous mistake that had been made of believing that the Greek general was in the pay of Fascism. The nation was amused by this incredible Fascist ingenuousness. It was as though Mussolini and Fascism, looking at themselves through a distorting mirror, had seen their own silhouettes puffed out to gigantic stature. Fascism and Fascists were in reality of grotesque pigmy proportions when compared with the events in Europe.

The Italian people, who, though at war, still retained their neutral outlook, did not analyze the ethics of this war, and did not pay much heed to it even in those moments when they realized that the most terrible and irreparable damage was being perpetrated. It was Mussolini's war, not theirs. It was only the bombardments of the big cities of the peninsula that roused them from their drowsy indifference. Before their cities were bombed the Italian people regarded themselves as living on the outer perimeter of the great conflict, in which Germany figured as the protagonist,

followed by Mussolini who made a great noise and was anxious to have his own share in the glory.

But the Duce had a bitter awakening from his dreams of glory on May 19 when the Duke of Aosta was obliged to capitulate at Amba Alagi. In Italian East Africa Italian soldiers displayed all their traditional valor. They resisted and fought like lions to save the honor of the flag. But it was of no avail; it seemed as though fate had assigned to the Italian soldier the task of atoning with his own blood for the appalling blunders committed by Mussolini.

When I returned to Rome from Moscow, I saw that it was still the same old Rome. Nothing could disturb the Olympian calm and the fatuous conceit of all grades of officialdom—cabinet ministers, confederations, managing directors, newspaper editors—in short all circles in political and executive Rome. Mussolini's romance at Monte Mario still continued, and people looked on it as an established affair. Wags used to say that in front of the house where the Duce and his mistress used to meet was the inscription "Institute of Fascist Mysticism." To grasp the import of this joke the reader may be reminded that Fascism had actually established an Institute of Mysticism for the education of youth, in which instance the term mysticism implied the political religion of the Party.

Everybody talked about the fabulous wealth of the Ciano family. Old Ciano had died, leaving Galeazzo in control of his immense fortune. He was free to act like a Borgia pope possessed of great wealth and with an enormous following of relatives and favorites. Henceforth Ciano took very little interest in politics, for the Duce was intent on following his own whims and listened only to the voice of Berlin. Ciano had gone over, at least in a doctrinaire sense, to the opposi-

tion. There were rumors about stormy scenes between father-in-law and son-in-law.

Edda Mussolini Ciano was no Penelope. People used to wonder what sort of union there could be between her and Galeazzo when they began to lead completely separate existences. Edda was always intent on going her own way and amusing herself as she pleased. She was seen in Capri at least twice a year in quest of stimulating emotions—not the emotions which the marvellous landscape of Capri offers, but the emotions which a capricious and extravagant woman indulges in when she has complete liberty of action. Edda liked to revert from time to time to the bold and daring thrills of primitive existence. Perhaps she wished to emulate the mysterious caprice of the sirens who hid behind the reefs on moonlit nights and beguiled the sailors with their songs.

In Rome the crowd of idle snobs continued to loaf up and down the Via Veneto. There, in front of the confectionery shops and the florists, on the slope leading to Porta Pinciana and Villa Borghese they hob-nobbed—a strange blend of country gentlemen, German motion picture stars who had come to work in the Cinecittà Studios, decayed Roman aristocrats, politicians, and best-selling novelists. There they met and exchanged tit-bits of the latest scandal. At first endless rows of little tables used to be placed on the side-walk of Via Veneto, to permit some of these idlers to loaf through whole afternoons, but one day a group of students who had been called up for service were filled with rage as they saw them. Taunts and fisticuffs were exchanged, and the police were obliged to have the tables removed.

After a time the economic life of the country began to feel the repercussions of the war. Not that much notice was taken of it, but food supplies were not up to the standard

of twelve months before. The Italian is not a big eater, but he develops an appetite when his cupboard is beginning to run out of food. Although they had less to sell than previously, the shops had plenty of money, as they looked for a threefold increase on peace-time profits. Hotel porters offered to secure for wealthy and powerful clients all kinds of commodities that could not be bought in the open market, especially coffee, perfumes and foreign cigarettes. Prices were, of course, a very secondary consideration. These greedy clients of the black marketeers were either bigwigs of the Party, business men paying a brief visit to Rome, or strangers to the country with their wallets full of foreign money. I believe that the railroads and the airlines never worked so hard as during this period. There was a constant coming and going to the capital of strangers who were noted for their extravagant spending. But it was the last phase of a relative and ephemeral prosperity. After some time there were more intensive restrictions, and it was no longer an easy matter to book a berth in a wagon-lit unless you paid at least three times its actual price.

On my way to Rome I passed through Milan, which made a more definite impression on me. It was obviously more conscious of the war and its discomforts. But what a changed Milan it was! The well-known atmosphere of energy, strife, conquest and victorious achievement which made the beloved city an example not only to Italy but to a considerable part of Europe seemed now forced to struggle with obstacles and difficulties. Factories were unable to work full time through lack of raw materials. Industrial concerns were suffering from the paralysis of the war. Industrialists were obliged to go to Rome to beg the Government for money and import permits, and frequently succeeded only by slipping a few thousand lira notes into the hands of subordinate state officials. Nobody could distinguish the

borderline between the lawful and the unlawful. On the other hand, some industrialists had their factories closed and their workmen standing idle, though at the end of the week they came to demand their pay, as was but just. It was illegal to dismiss members of the staff and the closing down of establishments was prohibited by law. It was necessary to "come to an arrangement"—a term the implication of which the Italian knows very well, because, it is the only means of escape when life becomes a puzzle too difficult to solve. Men in the trenches who cannot get the bare necessities of life "come to an arrangement"; employees who cannot bring home the wherewithal to satisfy the pangs of hunger of their large families "come to an arrangement"; politicians looking for promotion or for pardon for some mistake they have made "come to an arrangement"; when the whole nation lacks the impetus to rise from its proletarian status, it "comes to an arrangement."

The Italians dreaded the entry of America into the war, or rather, they did not know whether they dreaded it or desired it, because America's entry would probably be the determining factor in the conflict, and would speed up the return of peace. Berlin kept her eyes fixed on the United States as a potential danger; but in Rome it was an eventuality that was considered with the greatest seriousness, because some ten million Italians lived in America. The Italian-Americans were an investment for Italy, for money was sent by them in a steady stream to their families, to say nothing of the moral support they gave their native land by their toil in a distant rich and powerful foreign country. Italians at home based their hopes on their fellow-countrymen in America as their best ambassadors. They wondered whether their kinsmen across the ocean would succeed in securing clemency for Italy, if America should decide to go to war against the Axis.

And what about the military developments? Germany had sprung an offensive on Russia—an offensive which, at the start, seemed to go very well. Of course they could not know in Rome what I knew, seeing that I had only just left Russia. I was aware that the Russians, though they feared an attack by Germany, and were preparing to meet it, did not expect it so soon. Russia was still going through the process of completing her preparations for war when the German troops hurled themselves suddenly on her territory. If Stalin had not been so firmly established in power it would have been a repetition of the disastrous end of France. But Stalin was not the man to be dismayed, even had the Germans taken Moscow in their first dash across the frontier.

I tried to air these views in a series of articles which the *Popolo d'Italia* published under another name. I had studied the spirit of the Soviet people at close range, I pointed out that there was no use in cherishing any illusions on the subject, because on their own terrain the Russians would achieve miraculous results. The Russian nation would respond as a man to the exhortations of Stalin. If the German General Staff believed that in this instance they could successfully play their usual surprize card, they would be facing a serious disillusionment, for Russia was not a country to be trifled with. The assurance given by the German Government that the campaign on the Soviet front would be finished in a few weeks could only convince the ultra-credulous. To me, Russia was like a monstrous octopus which, even if you lop off its tentacles, shoots out others which seize you from every direction and strangle you. Has anybody ever seen these gigantic monsters die easily? You do not know where their hearts are situated, and where the sensitive and delicate membrane is hidden in which is the whole secret of the vitality of those dreadful hydras.

Hitler appeared to have underestimated the difficulties of the undertaking. His head swollen by victories, he flung himself furiously against an immovable wall. That wall may have trembled, but it remained firm on its foundation. Russia would stand firm, no matter what happened.

But these victories of the first weeks, which recalled the lightning, mad race over the fields of France, left Roman circles open-mouthed. It was thought that Hitler was about to display to the world another of his acts of prowess. Although I tried my utmost to persuade people that this series of over-runnings and occupations would be followed by another series of painful reverses, nobody would listen to me. My series of articles was cut short.

Rosso, the Italian Ambassador in Moscow, had, meanwhile, reached Rome after a difficult journey which started from Moscow on the day following the outbreak of war on the Eastern front, and continued over the Caucasus and Asia Minor through Istanbul and the Balkans. Rosso's last hours in Moscow had been distressing. He learned of the Declaration of War from the radio. Everybody was taken by surprise. In the radio broadcast which the Ambassador heard there was a message quoted from Stefani, stating that the Italian Government, associating itself with the German Government, had declared war on Russia. Rosso had had no official communications from Rome, and not being able to trust a mere radio announcement, which might be false, he went to the Kremlin to have the statement confirmed by Wyczinsky, the Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs. In the Kremlin there was all the agitation and bustle of a serious crisis. Rosso had to wait a long time before he got an interview. The moment he saw Wyczinsky, he asked, "Has the Commissar been informed that my country is at war with yours? Please forgive this peculiar way of asking for information on a matter which I should

have learned from another source, but unfortunately I have no instructions from Rome and I am in the dark with regard to the situation."

Wyczinsky was unable to inform him there and then whether the information was true or false. It was already known in the Kremlin that Germany had declared war, but the Vice-Commissar had heard nothing about Italy. He sent for his secretary and told him to make an enquiry on the matter forthwith. After a few minutes the reply came that Italy had followed Germany's example, and was now to be considered an enemy of the Soviet Union.

Rosso's confusion as he returned to the embassy may well be imagined. If telegrams had not come from Rome, it was either because they had gone astray in the general muddle or because Palazzo Chigi had simply forgotten to inform its representative. The Declaration of War had been made to the Soviet Ambassador in Rome.

During the hours that followed our embassy tried to keep in contact, as was natural, with the German embassy, as they were both in the same boat. Schulenburg too was excited and disconcerted, too immersed in the indispensable routine of preparations for leaving. That same evening agents of the G.P.U. presented themselves at the headquarters of our embassy in the Wesnina Ulica to demand, first, the handing over of all arms that might be there, and secondly, the immediate dismissal of the Russian personnel in our offices and in the personal employment of the Ambassador. This involved only some clerks, a few messengers, domestic servants and porters.

On the following day all the members of the embassy left Moscow by a direct special train for Batum. The journey was slow and exhausting and there were cases of physical prostration and collapse among the travellers, owing to the

excitement of the last perturbed hours of their stay in Moscow.

I met Rosso and the others once more at the Termini Station in Rome at the end of their pilgrimage. Rosso confirmed my own impression that war had come like a bombshell to the Government and to Soviet public opinion—so utterly unexpected was it. The reports which all the diplomatic representatives of the Tripartite Pact in Moscow had sent to their respective Governments only a few days before June 22 were unanimous in denying the possibility of such a conflict.

Ciano was not in Rome when Rosso and the others arrived there. They had to wait for a week before they could get an interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In Palazzo Chigi, as I have already pointed out, they were preparing for news of a complete Russian collapse. Once more, as though his past experiences had taught him nothing, Mussolini was seized with an irresistible itch to get into the limelight. Protracted negotiations were started between Rome and Berlin, to devise ways and means for Italy's "symbolical" participation in the Russian campaign.

It was very lucky for our soldiers that the preparations for the organization of the Italian Expeditionary Force for Russia took rather a long time. Italian infantrymen were saved from the painful fate of those German soldiers who had set out for a war which seemed destined to be of brief duration, and consequently started the campaign without any preparation for wintering on the frozen steppes of Russia.

An agreement was made between the Italian and German Commands that the former should provide for the transport of troops from Italy to the Eastern Front from their own resources and even with their own trains. The Italians were

to make provision on their own account for all their essential requirements.

This was another proof of the slender bond which existed between fighting Italy and fighting Germany, and how little camaraderie prevailed between the two armed groups. We had to prepare our own convoys to transport Italian troops by degrees across unknown territories, deep into the boundless immensities of the Russian landscape. When we ran short of water the Germans did not help us.

So far as we were concerned we had returned to the days when Napoleon's disastrous plans took us thousands of miles from our native land to face a fight which was not ours.



## X. THE LESSON OF AFRICA

AT THIS POINT I WAS CALLED TO WATCH THE VICISSITUDES OF the war from a different observation post—that of Sweden. Stockholm is a great recompense to a man who has had to drag on a feverish nomad existence alternating between a Berlin tormented by war, and a Rome blissfully ignorant and unstable on the borderland of this war, going thence to a Moscow which he was forced to leave just at the precise moment when it too was caught up in the conflagration. The capital of Sweden was hospitable, restful, and firmly determined to defend its peace. Morgagni said to me, "You may choose between Rome, Vichy, some cities of South America, and Stockholm." I made my choice, and I have not repented of it.

Up there, in the calmness of the north, gazing on a landscape whose multicoloured stretches of swamp stand out more brilliantly in the reflection of the semi-Arctic light, living amid a people who have learned to appreciate the benefits of a civilian life undarkened by the fierce emotions of war, one is not swayed by passion, and the world's problems are weighed with a more detached and calm contemplativeness. How this corner of Europe has succeeded in keeping clear of the miasma, and immune to the sorcery of

the illusions that cause war, seems a miracle. Moscow was like that when I was there, and people there lived more detached from the European conflict. But all has been changed there of course. The peace which was a source of pride to the Russian people is a thing of the past, and millions of human lives have been lost owing to Germany's insensate craving for destruction.

From Stockholm I resumed sending to Stefani my daily messages giving details of the repercussions of all that happened in the world around me. I was assisted by a good colleague, Giovanni Arista, who was forced to give up the study of comparative philosophy and turn his hand to dealing with politics and war—utterly different themes, which were quite new to him. The days passed by as we recorded events which were always more and more unforeseen.

A little before the Christmas of 1941 the United States entered the war officially. It was another of Hitler's notions that led to America's direct participation in the conflict. That notion originated from his crack-brained imagination and his boundless megalomania. But perhaps he only precipitated a state of affairs which had now become ineluctable. North American policy was turning in favor of Great Britain, and Roosevelt got the Lend-Lease Act passed in order to be able to come to the assistance of all who were fighting against the usurper and the ravisher of Europe.

Hitler felt that he had only to invoke the Tripartite Pact in order to frighten and checkmate the United States. Japan could force the hand of the Republic of the Stars and Stripes, and so contribute materially to the crusade for "the New Order." Thence came the Pearl Harbor treachery. It needed only this to galvanize the people of North America into concerted action. The wave of indignation that swept over the Americans when they were confronted with this provocative and perfidious act on the part of Japan was ter-

rific. It may be that Hitler and his accomplices believed that, in the face of this first threat, the people of the United States would revolt against their President and either overthrow him or force him to observe an absolute neutrality in the European conflict. In the very same way Berlin believed that the Bolshevik regime would have crumbled at the mere sight of the German armies. But the Fuehrer was merely piling new mistakes on those he had already committed. North American isolationists, instead of being given a fresh impetus, went over to the ranks of the interventionists in the hour of the insult offered to the nation. Germany found herself facing a new and an even more dread adversary.

From our observation post in Sweden, too, we were looking on at North Africa, a new theatre of war. By the end of February, 1941, Mussolini was forced to realize that many other things were needed for a war in the desert beside the brave Italian infantryman who stumbled along with his rifle over the scorching sands to die on the enemy's barbed wire. Water was needed; wood was needed for the battalion field-kitchens. Finally, tanks were indispensable for fighting in the desert, and Italy only had a very limited number and those had a very limited gunpowder strength. Owing to the lack of all these things our army in Africa had to withdraw before the pressure of the enemy under the command of Wavell, sacrificing Tobruk and Benghazi during the course of their retreat. It was perfectly obvious that to be in a position to win we needed new up-to-date weapons suitable for the terrain, and a system of organization fool-proof to the last degree. The nation which possessed tanks in large numbers was Germany, Italy's ally.

So Mussolini asked his friend Hitler for at least one division of tanks and reinforcements of anti-tank guns. Mussolini wanted only arms, not men. His idea was that the cam-

paign in Libya should be kept up by Italian forces alone, provided with a certain amount of German matériel. The prestige of the nation and of Fascism demanded that the Italian army should be unaided and that, having placed itself in a difficult situation, Italy should get out of it solely by her own resourcefulness, with the help of her own soldiers. Fate had given Italy the task of maintaining her own fight on the other shore of the Mediterranean, where there was nothing but barren desert, lacking in every kind of natural resources, or any advantage whatsoever, except that of prestige and tradition—an advantage which appealed to Italy alone. Apropos of this, in the course of a speech before the Abyssinian War Mussolini stated that it was the tragic destiny of Italy to fight for the possession of mere patches of deserts dotted at very long intervals with wells, and difficult of access. It was strange that Fate should call a proletarian country to perform superhuman colonizing feats. Libya had entailed for Italy a long record of blood and sweat, and all the consequences of a titanic struggle between man and nature. Twenty-five years of patient toil, the last four of which were under the guidance of the Libyan Governor, Italo Balbo, had wrought positive miracles. To be sure, Libya could not be compared with the richer regions of South Africa, but students of colonial politics used to flock there from all over the world to study the system that had been followed for the reclamation of those provinces. All this now ran the risk of being lost owing to a military defeat. Mussolini was thinking of a counter-attack in order to free Italy's model colony and possibly to continue the victorious march right into Egypt.

But Berlin was determined not to comply with Mussolini's desire. It may have been because the German General Staff had little faith in the Duce's strategic talents, or it may have been that Hitler was contemplating taking over Africa

for himself. One thing is certain, and that is that help was granted solely on one condition, which was that complete German armored divisions with their own arms and their own generals should enter the battle of the desert alongside 200,000 Italian soldiers, and that the command of the counter-attacking forces should be entrusted to Rommel.

The inevitable confusion began at this point. Sometimes it was not known whether Rommel or General Gariboldi was in command in Libya. The latter, though nominally in supreme command, had no say in the conduct of major operations. The Italian General Staff found itself confronted with an extremely delicate and difficult situation, because wherever they turned the Germans wished to reserve for themselves the right of making all decisions.

All in all, the German contribution to the African campaign was outstandingly inferior to that of Italy. To transport those two divisions of German tanks with their subsidiary appurtenances, the Italians had to encounter tremendous difficulties, because during the Mediterranean crossing they had to face the constant threat of British submarines, and the R.A.F. Moreover, at Palermo and Naples, the embarkation bases, a number of more or less serious disadvantages had to be encountered. The Germans did not leave for Africa until they had made sure that they had established a firm grip on the two ports just mentioned, and especially in Naples, where they firmly established their headquarters. They stayed in Naples for more than a month without budging, taking that city by storm with their spectacular equipment, commandeering the best hotels for their officers, seizing dumps and stores for war material, and taking possession of all the harbor installations for their own exclusive use.

The ships for the transport of troops to Africa had of necessity to travel in convoy, for the sake of greater security.

The Germans insisted on taking over all the airports in Sicily in order to be able to use them as bases for the Luftwaffe's aerial patrolling and bombardment. The Luftwaffe was under the command of Kesselring. Remembering all this, it is strange to think that the Italians under Graziani had originally set out for the war in Libya without any proper base, and lacking any form of security and all conveniences. Yet they fared forth boldly in the spirit of adventure which had once inspired Ulysses.

Our convoys suffered heavily from the activities of the R.A.F. On one occasion the R.A.F., starting from their base in Malta, attacked a big transport of ours which had on board a thousand Italian and German soldiers and a large amount of war matériel. Two-thirds of the men perished. Nobody knows fully the terrifying pages of the history of those Mediterranean crossings. The communiqüs of the Supreme Command never referred to them.

Towards the end of January, 1942, after several months of preparation, Rommel decided to start the offensive for the purpose of driving back the British to the Egyptian frontier. It must not be imagined that the Germans alone comprised the front line in this attack, for it included also Italian infantry divisions. In the gaps between tank and tank the young Italian soldier marched to the attack. Had it not been for our infantry Rommel would have been unable to do anything.

The action in the end of January produced no great advantages, however, Wavell had firmly established himself in the territory he had conquered. The forces of the Axis made slender progress towards Tobruk. In Berlin it was said that this offensive should not be regarded as the real offensive, but as an action of approach and a tentative probing of the terrain.

Some time elapsed without any incident of note. On

May 1, Hitler and Mussolini met again, when it was decided to advance. Rommel had got fresh reinforcements, and had arranged for the substitution of some of the tanks which had come from Germany by others fitted with a special system, already adopted by the British, which prevented the water in the radiators from boiling and evaporating.

On June 19 Tobruk was beleaguered, and two days later it was recaptured. In that Libyan war Tobruk was what Kharkov was in the war on the Eastern Front. Its possession passed several times from the one side to the other, and it suffered indescribably in the course of the series of desperate battles, in which it was the objective. The British Eighth Army, commanded by General Auchinleck was obliged to retreat rapidly, leaving one position after the other including Mersa Matruh, back on El Alamein. All this was just a mad gallop in which the world saw nothing but the boldness of General Rommel's strategy, and the overwhelming might of his army of panzers, forgetting that at the same lightning speed the riflemen of the Bologna, Trento, Pavia, Folgore, and Littorio divisions had to advance. But Rommel got all the credit for his achievement, and was promoted by Hitler to the rank of Marshal.

Nobody denies, of course, that Rommel showed himself a commander of great ability. Even Churchill paid tribute in the House of Commons to his generalship. In Italy people spoke of Rommel as a military genius reminiscent of Napoleon. The Italians did not forget that they owed a debt of gratitude to the Germans who had helped our army in Libya reconquer the colony.

But their admiration of and gratitude to the Germans notwithstanding, the Italians had to endure a great many humiliations at their hands. The splendid help given to us by the Rommel panzer army was accompanied by a series of acts of insolence on the part of the Germans. Once more it

was demonstrated how impossible it was for Germans and Italians to work side by side for a common cause. During the course of the whole advance the guests acted domineeringly towards their hosts, whenever they felt inclined to do so. In short they treated their Italian comrades in arms with haughtiness and contempt. They behaved as though all the merit for any success was theirs alone.

As has been already said, the uninitiated never knew who was the commander at the head of the Libyan forces. Even when Garibaldi was superseded by General Bastico this equivocal state of affairs continued, and was allowed to continue purposely by the German Government and in the German press Rommel alone was mentioned. But when, some months later, the fortunes of war changed and what had been a sensational advance was changed into a tragic withdrawal, the German press suddenly discovered the existence of an Italian general who was in command of all the troops in Libya, and in reply to the query of a journalist at the Conference of the Foreign Press in Berlin Schmidt declared that Bastico, being the senior in command even above Rommel, bore all the responsibility for the disaster.

I never could understand why the Government of Rome did not think it necessary to make some very clear and detailed statements with regard to the Libyan campaign. After the disastrous loss of our possessions in Africa, it should have been able in some form or other to explain to the world how things stood. In the Ministry of War in Rome there must have been documents of extraordinary interest calculated to throw light on many obscure incidents, unless the Germans, when they occupied the Italian capital, did away with them. But the guilt of criminal silence rests on our authorities for allowing darkness to brood over events in Africa—darkness which the Germans turned to good account for themselves by circulating the rumor that the

Libyan campaign collapsed through the fault of the Italians.

Nobody has told, by the way, about the strange manœuvres devised by Germany to secure, unknown to Italy, predominance in Egypt, in the event of that nation being conquered. The most advanced position reached by Rommel, at El Alamein, is hardly sixty miles distant from Alexandria. At that moment it seemed as though Hitler had Egypt in his pocket. Taking advantage of the impression produced among the Egyptians themselves by the sight of the famous condottiere Rommel sweeping forward with his tanks towards the sources of the Nile, the Germans tried, with the help of their agents, to prepare the ground in their favor by discrediting Italy among the Egyptian population.

If the Axis had had the luck to occupy Alexandria and Cairo, there would have been a repetition of what happened in France, with the sole difference that this time the glory of the victory would have been equally shared between Italians and Germans. Italy would have been present at the occupation of Egypt by Germany, and Hitler would have once more urged Mussolini to forego any demands pending the conclusion of peace. And to think that Mussolini had made all his preparations to enter Alexandria in triumph!

The crafty game was, however, well masked by German propaganda which insisted on the perfectly harmonious collaboration with Italy. They wished to prevent the world from knowing about the unpleasant incidents that were continually taking place in Africa between the Germans and Italians, their mutual accusations and recriminations. They did not want the world to know that the soldiers of the two armies regarded each other with distrust and hostility, that the officers of the two armies shirked saluting one another, and that disputes were constantly cropping up over trifles. I cannot understand how General Bastico could have endured so long that atmosphere of tension, but

maybe he adopted the expedient of leaving to Rommel all the initiative, as well as all the responsibility. If an Italian general had tried to make a stand against German pretensions, he would have been immediately repudiated by Rome.

When in August I went for a short holiday to Italy I saw that the canker was very far advanced. Fascist policy was writhing convulsively from the disease which it had brought upon itself. For the future, it would be impossible for this Fascist policy to show the faintest trace of independence. The political life of the peninsula was dominated by the iron law of a strict Italo-German co-operation. The Germans had Sicily entirely in their hands. Their control was extended to all Italian activities connected with the war. The wish of the German military attaché in Rome was a religion, even in the eyes of Cavallero, the Under-Secretary for War. The Germans knew that it would be enough for them to apply directly to Palazzo Venezio, where the Duce did not tolerate any discussion when it was a question of satisfying a desire of the Germans.

Italian foreign trade was reduced to the interchanges visualized in the agreements between Germany and Italy, and very little remained to be done with neutral countries. A good deal of Italian merchandise to and from the neutral North got no further than Germany, under the pretext of difficulties of transport. Cargoes of Italian fruit remained for weeks rotting on the quays of Lubeck and Stettin, because the Germans would not allow them to continue their route to Scandinavia. Much of this merchandise of ours was simply impounded and sold again by the Germans in neutral countries in order to obtain foreign money. The name of the country of origin was changed. Germany carried out the business transaction, and Italy remained with nothing.

In more than one neutral state it happened that a Ger-

man commercial traveller got himself appointed as representative of an alleged Italian firm of exporters, with the sole aim of putting a stop to those importations which meant either competition with, or an obstacle of some other kind to German foreign trade. In the Government offices in Rome these things were known, but nobody dared to raise his voice in protest. Some high-placed Fascist officials even showed themselves very accommodating in the matter.

Having arrived in the Eternal City at a period in the campaign which was more lucky for the forces of the Axis, which still held the advanced post of El Alamein, I found that an optimistic feeling prevailed, tinged with a certain amazement that the Germans were not concluding the offensive on the Eastern front.

To all who asked my views on the developments in Russia, where they knew I had been, I gave the usual reply, which expressed a conviction that had existed in my mind ever since the first day of the war against the Soviets—that Hitler would break his ribs in the East.

At this juncture Mario Appelius raved on the radio more violently than ever, surpassing even Virginio Gayda in his imbecile statements. Almost every evening on the Rome radio, in the feature “News of the Day’s Events,” he used to launch forth in the language of the gutter against the Allies and especially against Churchill. Compared with his vulgar outbursts on the radio the effusions on the Berlin radio were like bouquets of summer flowers. Radio listeners in Italy were so disgusted that when the announcer stated: “We will now give the review of the events of the day by Mario Appelius,” they would switch off before the full name was pronounced. That was how he came by the nickname “Mario App.” On the other hand, though Mussolini never knew about it, the Italian public listened every evening with an almost religious concentration to the discourse

given on the London radio by Colonel Stevens. For seven or eight years—perhaps longer—Colonel Stevens addressed the Italian people from London every evening, whether the weather was good or bad, with a simplicity and sincerity which were all the more appealing owing to his perfect southern accent. In order to open their eyes about Mussolini and Fascism, he started his series of talks before the Abyssinian War, and, like a veteran on the battle field, he never abandoned his post. "Stevens is speaking," the Italian listeners whispered to one another, and listened with rapt attention. Even the English people had no idea of the outstanding part this man played, without knowing it, in the formation of the new free conscience of the Italian people.

A little weariness, and the first signs of discouragement, began to develop among the Italian people when they realized that the developments promised by Mussolini were not verified, and that the war showed no indication of coming to an end. The shadow of discouragement spread more and more, and assumed a darker hue, as a result of statements made by German travellers who came to Italy. They told how the Allied Air Forces had wrought terrible devastation in many cities in Germany, among others Hamburg, Cologne, Dusseldorf and even in Berlin itself. They declared that the German cities could not stand it much longer, and they took a very gloomy view of the future. A sardonic joke about the Blitzkrieg which went the rounds among these German visitors, ran thus: "Do you know what will be the best-seller in the year 1960? The book written by Hitler from his headquarters with the title: *Fünfzehn Jahre Blitzkrieg* (Fifteen Years of Blitzkrieg)."

On their part the Italians were fond of repeating ad nauseam a little story much in the same vein. Two friends, so the story ran, met after listening to Mussolini's speech. "What do you think of that speech?" one of them asked

the other. The man who was questioned did not know how to reply right away. But the demand having been repeated, he took his friend by the arm, and went off with him to his own house. When they got there they shut themselves up in a room. The man who had been questioned looked first in all the dark corners and under the bed, tested the walls to ascertain if they were soundproof, and then said in a whisper, "Well, if you want to know the truth, but don't tell it to anybody, I liked the speech!"

Rome laughed, but the war was gripping the life of the nation more and more and strangling it. The first sacrifices had to be made for the Libyan campaign. We had to send to Germany a considerable share of our agricultural products. That was in accordance with agreement. Some establishments worked only one day in the week. The cost of living rose. Rationing had hardly been applied to Italy before it proved to be the most rigid in all Europe. The quantity of bread allowed per head was inadequate, and it was made with a mysterious mixture of indigestible ingredients. Oil, so necessary to Mediterranean people, was un procurable. Even an African Negro, who certainly leads a frugal enough existence, could not have lived on such a system of rationing. Yet Italy laughed, and was resigned, and sang as she had always done. It was always a comfort to me in those days when I returned from war-torn countries to come to Italy to refresh my soul.

If there had been no such thing as Fascism! If there had never been an Axis! That detested word "Axis" was on the lips of all Fascists, who hardly even knew the meaning of the term. What a strange type of mammal this Italian Fascist was! I am not thinking of the hierarch, the egotistical and profiteering Fascist, but of the ordinary humble member of the organization. Mussolini had declared "We shall win!" and from that day, at the foot of every official letter,

and sometimes even at the foot of private letters, alongside the signature of the writer, the Fascist wrote in bold characters, "Vinceremo" (we shall win). It never occurred to him to cast his eye on the map of Europe. He abhorred discussion, and preferred his own blind, narrow, unquestioning obedience. At home, no members of the family would dare to make any protest against Fascism—it would be an outrage. But did not his faith in Fascism bring him some advantages? Nothing to speak of. I believe that a little of the spirit of the first great world war inspired the average obedient orthodox Fascist when he said to himself, "The chief has ordered it! The chief wants it done!" So he went to his death because it was the wish of his chief.

The Fascist saw the war through a kaleidoscope. As propaganda for this war, he used the arguments that had been drilled into him—space to live in and defense against Bolshevism. But where space to live in began and ended—that was a question he never asked himself. He never asked himself whether Germany, for which he had such profound admiration, would be equal to the task she had undertaken of bending all Europe to her own despotic will. He preferred to ask himself with candid amazement why Great Britain and America were so obstinate that they could not see the fatal alternatives put by Hitler to our continent—a German victory or the triumph of Bolshevism. And what if Europe were given over to the virus of Bolshevism? If Hitler, for instance, in order to revenge himself for the opposition of the democratic powers, should himself throw open the gates of Europe to the subversive Asiatic flood! "Only imagine it!" said the Fascist. "Bolshevism on the coast of the Channel—facing England!"

But this ordinary type of Fascist could not be held responsible for his inability to see that the nation was hurtling rapidly to its ruin, for its petty rulers declared that just one

minute before its collapse Fascism would save itself and would win, and that Germany would triumph. If he still preserved even a shred of his Fascist idealism, he would always wait patiently for that reversal of the situation which the false prophets had guaranteed to him.

Capri was full of German soldiers on leave. Most of them belonged to the Hermann Goering Division, which fought in the front line in Africa. Some of these German soldiers talked about wanting to return home. The news from the Libyan front was not bad, but it was not reassuring. After El Alamein Rommel did not succeed in advancing one foot, but he held his position quite firmly. The British seemed to be marking time. Perhaps they were reorganizing. Churchill had just been in Cairo, and on the battlefield he had superseded Auchinleck by General Alexander. Montgomery was put in command of the Eighth Army.

I returned to Stockholm when my leave was finished, and had hardly resumed work when the British started a counter-offensive in Africa. They had got reinforcements of men and war material. Throughout the whole summer Allied convoys had come and gone without undergoing serious losses, and the army which made the attack in the defense of El Alamein and in the depression of Quettara was a band of fresh and resolute men. The Italo-German bastion, as if smitten by an unexpected cyclone, began to totter and crack.

It was a time of alarms in Rome. Where was Rommel? people asked anxiously. It seemed that he was not with his troops, but in Berlin enjoying triumph after triumph. At the first sign of danger, however, he went by plane to the head of his army, where a serious position faced him. His front line was broken. The columns of the British tanks were driving a wedge into the line held by the Italians and Germans. Thereupon this man who had been considered a

genius, and who had been extolled to the stars in the Press as the perfect general, the leader whom Goebbels, in words of enthusiastic admiration, had introduced to the crowd in the Sports Palast in Berlin, as the greatest man since the days of Hindenburg, this invincible hero decided that the position was hopeless and that all resistance would be futile. He even considered it superfluous to inform commanders of front line Italian units of his decision. What concerned him most at the moment was to save his panzer army by a retreat covered by rearguard action. And of course the rearguard had to be supplied by the Italian divisions, Folgore and Pavia. These Italians found themselves practically alone, abandoned without any motor vehicles, because the Germans had taken them all as they went.

I am only stating what I heard from a great number of returned soldiers, and what was confirmed at the front by the accounts of the special war correspondents of the English and American newspapers at the headquarters of General Montgomery. The Italian detachments thought at first that they had to put up a stand against the enemy, and thereby they lost time, and gave no thought of putting themselves in safety. Rommel's plan visualized the necessity of sacrificing the rearguard; but, that being so, why did he not leave for their protection, at least a few of his tanks? Over 50,000 Italians were taken prisoner during those first dramatic days. Whole divisions were surrounded and annihilated. The infantrymen of the Folgore looked like the lost wandering souls of the *Purgatorio* in that desert following on the heels of the British Eighth Army, who, in its eagerness to pursue Rommel, had no time to worry about them. An airman who miraculously managed to be taken prisoner told me about the chivalrous attitude of the Allies towards our soldiers. The British had very swift armored cars at the disposal of the Eighth Army; they appeared un-

expectedly at our airport and in front of our barricades, but did not open fire until they had made sure that the Italian soldiers, who had been left without arms and protection of any kind, were out of danger. The enemy tried to spare the life of the Italian soldier, knowing that he was defenseless.

The rest is history. Nothing could be done any longer to stop "Monty," who, heedless of the murderous fire of the German anti-tank 88 millimeter guns, which were truly formidable weapons, continued to forge ahead with clock-work precision, even as Rommel continued to fall back with equal precision until he found himself in Tunisia, and eventually without any other foothold on the soil of Africa. Everything went to pieces with the Axis, and the Germans were absolutely unable to organize the defense of any position. For the honor of the flag the Italians wished to resist to the last. They were helpless, however, to do anything without backing.

Before this happened, however, General Messe, the commander of our Libyan armies, seeing that Rommel's sole concern was to get away his own motorized divisions in safety, and that by doing so, the very last region of Libya, Tripolitania, would be abandoned without a fight, went to Rome for the express purpose of talking to Mussolini. He was first received by Cavallero, who was obviously irritated as he listened to his account of the position in Africa, but, in deference to Messe's importunities he reluctantly agreed to arrange that he should see the Duce at Palazzo Venezia. Precious days passed before the Duce learned from another source of the presence of Messe in Rome and desired to see him. The general tried to convince Mussolini that the abandonment of every form of resistance by Rommel was a crime against Italy. But Cavallero continually interrupted Messe, and did not allow him to finish his statement. Messe tried to prevail on Mussolini at least to order the defense of

Tripolitania, our most ancient colony.

But by the time this conversation took place it was too difficult to adopt defensive measures; furthermore, Mussolini seemed too distressed and grieved to be able to make any decision. But two days later Cavallero was dismissed and suspended by General Ambrosio.

On November 8 the American Expeditionary Force, commanded by General Eisenhower, disembarked in Algiers and Morocco, and inflicted a still more serious blow on the Axis. After this Mussolini saw all hopes disappearing of reinforcing his wretched broken divisions in the French Colonial territories. He was among the Italians who at that moment hurled maledictions against Hitler for not having allowed Italy in July, 1940, to occupy Tunisia, which would now be a God-sent refuge for the retreating armies. I fancy that Hitler himself was sorry for having put this veto on Mussolini's suggestion at the time of the signing of the armistice with France.

The American disembarkation was carried out with an impressive expeditiousness. It had a disastrous effect on the Axis, which now had its rear also threatened. If Eisenhower had immediately gone to Tunis, where, at the moment of his disembarkation, there were only the Italian and German Military Commissions which had been pre-arranged in accordance with the Armistice, the disaster would have been even more sweeping, because the Italo-German forces would not have been able to make, as they did, a bridge-head in the South of Tunisia in order to be able to try a jump across in safety to Sicily.

Tripoli was evacuated on January 1, 1943. It had been the noblest and brightest symbol of our colonial work; it was the city dearest of all their African possessions to the hearts of the Italians. Mussolini had some years previously raised Tripolitania to the level of a province in the Metro-

politan territory, and, in consequence of this it had become, as it were, a continuation of the peninsula, and a tract of the sacred soil of their native land.

On the day after the fall of Tripoli Italy registered a change that was sensational in Government circles. Galeazzo Ciano was forced by Mussolini to resign his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in exchange, was made Ambassador to the Vatican. How this happened is worth narrating. It seems that Ciano had discovered Mussolini's intention of getting rid of him. Accordingly he lost no time, but telephoned immediately to Guariglia, our representative at the Vatican, and hence, for the time being, still his subordinate, to ask the Cardinal Secretary of State what attitude the Holy See would adopt toward the nomination of himself, Ciano, as its Ambassador from the Italian Government. It was a question of "approval," to use the diplomatic term. Guariglia was, of course, flabbergasted at learning what he was to do, but, nevertheless, he carried out his duty, since Ciano was still the Minister. In these circumstances, how could the Cardinal Secretary of State reply, except in the affirmative? He granted his approval, and with a document confirming it in his pocket, Ciano presented himself before Mussolini, who had meanwhile sent for him to sign his resignation from the post of Foreign Minister. The "torpedoing" which Mussolini had planned did not actually transpire, for Ciano anticipated him by exhibiting the letter whereby the Vatican "approved" of his nomination as Ambassador to the Holy See. It was a question of self-appointment; it was likewise a perfidious trick played on the Duce, who—so they say—in a fit of rage gave his son-in-law a slap in the face. There was nothing astonishing in this outburst of family squabbling. There had been bad blood for a long time between father-in-law and son-in-law, for Ciano used to speak openly about Mussolini as a "flabby

fool" and Mussolini did not hide his distrust of Ciano. This is one of the many instances of the low ebb to which the morale of official Fascist circles had fallen.

Events in Africa had been a bitter lesson; Mussolini had trusted too much to his own strength. The Mediterranean had never been, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the lake between Italy and Africa which Mussolini had always called it—a lake in which Italy could move at freedom. Even before hostilities had broken out, the Mediterranean problem had presented extreme obstacles, for, in order to become the ruler of a sea it was essential to conquer it and maintain the conquest of it. Perhaps one day Italy might have been able to assert her claim, when her naval power reached a point to enable her to lord it over the Mediterranean; but in 1940 Italy was still very far from having reached such a development. Great Britain would never resign her own supremacy in the Mediterranean except to superior forces, and perhaps not even then, because, while for Italy the overlordship of that sea is a question of prestige based on racial traditions, it is a matter of practical necessity for Great Britain.

Furthermore, Mussolini should have remembered that Italy of herself could not perform miracles. She is a country absolutely without any raw materials, being rich only in labor and good-will. In fifteen years of Fascist rule the poverty of the peninsula could not be transmitted into wealth, though the two great Anglo-Saxon Powers, Great Britain and America, had shown their sympathy for an Italy awakening to a new life. Mussolini would have been able to ensure for himself a high position in European esteem, and have made Italy increasingly prosperous had he appreciated the consent and assistance of the Great Powers. A more benevolent and attentive attitude had developed among them towards the Colonial aspirations of Italy, first pro-

claimed by Francesco Crispi, given poetic expression by Gabriele d'Annunzio in his "Songs from over the Seas," reaffirmed by Italian nationalists, and finally, and officially proclaimed by Mussolini himself when he became head of the Government.

But Mussolini, who could never shake off his obsession of grandiose expansion, decided to carry out an audacious coup in the conquest of Abyssinia, while the British Fleet was cruising in the Mediterranean and Eden at Geneva was calling on the world to protest against Italian violence. The Duce ought to have known that, had Great Britain wished, she could have prevented the attack on Ethiopia. At least when he had attained his purpose, he should have kept quiet, and tried to obtain pardon for the deed of violence which he had perpetrated and which had, luckily ended in a manner favorable to Italy. But perhaps it was because this act of violence was left unpunished that Mussolini went on to commit one act of madness after another, encouraged as he was now at Hitler's solidarity and support. In this way he eventually caused Italy to lose not only Abyssinia, but also Libya and the Mediterranean. "The other shore"—the African one, which Mussolini thought was within reach of his hand—faded further and further into the distance, disappearing in the sand clouds whirled about by the desert storms.

At the end of April another meeting took place between the Duce and Hitler. The communiqué issued after their meeting, reaffirmed "the common certainty of a final uncompromising victory." On the following day Tunis and Bizerte fell—the last garrison, the last hope. How many human lives were lost in the effort to cross the sea to Sicily, could never be ascertained. The R.A.F. and the British submarines were like terrible mortal scythes over the azure

expanse of the Strait. Messe was taken prisoner—so was General Arnim who commanded the German forces in Tunisia. But Rommel was no longer in Africa.

The repercussions of this disaster among the Italian people were formidable. But they did not yet culminate in a real revolt against the Government, simply because the Fascist and Nazi press insisted that the loss of Italy and of the last African base, although a cause of grief, did not imply any danger to Italy. They maintained that the Mediterranean, which had been so ungenerous in its treatment of the Axis, would be just as treacherous to the Allies if they should attempt to land on the peninsula. Sicily was described by the Roman newspapers as an impregnable fortress. They stated that the island was defended by a large number of Italian and German divisions, and that there were trains specially constructed to convey troops from one part of the coast to another, if the Allies tried to disembark anywhere. "Our most ardent desire," babbled the Berlin press, "is that the Allies should put us to the test and venture on the invasion of Sicily, which is not Tunis. After a few hours we will drive them back into the sea. Let them remember Dieppe!" And Mario Appelius said on the radio: "The English and American dogs will learn that the soil of Sicily burns even more fiercely than that of Africa!"



## XI. AN INGLORIOUS SUNSET

BEFORE THE CURTAIN RINGS DOWN ON THE LAST ACT OF THE Italian tragedy, I believe that I should state what I heard and saw when, in the spring of 1943, I left Stockholm and paid a last visit to my unhappy country.

It was May. The Allies had not yet set foot in Sicily, though they did so soon after, on July 10. The invasion will be remembered as one of the most successful enterprises of this war, and one of the most decisive importance, for as a result of it the continent of Europe which Hitler had declared to be an absolutely impregnable fortress was invaded for the first time. The fact is that he did not succeed in driving back the Allies into the Mediterranean. Of all the braggart challenges made by Hitler the most futile was when he defied the Allies to attempt an invasion of Europe. It could only be compared with that other braggart declaration when he said: "We shall hold Stalingrad, cost what it may." But Stalingrad was retaken by the Russians with appalling losses to the German army.

After Sicily the landing of the British and Americans in any part of the European continent was regarded as something that was definitely realizable. Only in Rome and Berlin was this possibility excluded, because Fascism and

Nazism, always united in their illusions, thought themselves strong enough to preclude it. It was Berlin that laid special emphasis on the inviolability and invulnerability of the continent, while Rome echoed the words of Germany as the patient echoes the words of the hypnotist. But if nobody could prophesy the exact spot on which the Allied force would land, there seemed to be no doubt that the attempt would most probably be made in the direction of Italy, in consideration of the nearness of Tunisia, which had just been conquered, and of Sicily, and also taking into account the very efficient control now carried out by the Allies over the Straits of Messina. The invasion of Sicily or Sardinia seemed more probable for, instance, than the invasion of Belgium, France or Norway. The objectives of the Allied observers were focused on Italy as the definite theatre of an imminent offensive.

The activity of the R.A.F. on the peninsula had been appreciably intensified and Anglo-American planes, with bases in Tunisia, were in a position to get with perfect ease to all the targets in Italy. After the violent bombardment of Berlin on March 1, attacks were made from bases in England, Africa and Malta on Italy's military and industrial objectives.

In Sicily the Axis got together as many planes as possible, German and Italian—though there were very few Italian ones left after the losses they had suffered in the African and Mediterranean skies. All Sicily had been converted into one huge German garrison under the command of Kesselring. The Sicilians were depressed and harassed when they saw the Germans behave as absolute masters in their land, and they made it plain later on by greeting with enthusiastic cheering the arrival of the Allies. The Germans made large-scale confiscations under the plea of defensive measures. The provincial and local bodies in Sicily were disre-

garded, just as though they did not exist, and the German command even secured the dismissal of several, because they had not been completely subservient to their whims. The only people who remained at their posts were the magistrates and mayors who, through fear or through pro-German sentiments, placed themselves at the disposal of the German military authorities and resigned all their own prerogatives. The island was impoverished because the Germans seized all its stores and especially its foodstuffs. It might be said, indeed, that Sicily lived by sacrificing itself for the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and their officers. Those officers even indulged in curious speculations, such as the illicit sale of the gasoline which was supplied very liberally to the German divisions, as the Russian and Rumanian oil wells were in German hands. The sales were made to the civilian population in order to get money and to continue the work of bleeding which was well under way.

The cities most tortured by bombings were Genoa, Turin, Naples and Milan, and the Sicilian cities of Messina, Trapani and Palermo. The effects of an aerial attack on a populous Italian center are appalling. All the cities just mentioned are densely populated. On many occasions, in the early years of his rule, Mussolini tried to grapple with urbanism and had advocated an exodus to the country from the over-populated cities. His preaching was in vain, however, because these teeming herds of city dwellers which had developed automatically with the development of industry, commerce, education and bureaucracy, are part of the economic life of the nation. In Genoa and Naples the buildings are frequently so close to one another that the sun never penetrates into the narrow, tortuous streets, flanked by masses of brick and mortar, or at best only shoots slender shafts of light between them. When a bomb falls in such a maze of buildings, it wreaks terrible havoc,

as it crashes down on the homes of thousands of people living in the confines of a few square acres. The ramshackle houses erected in these restricted areas sometimes laid out as in Genoa, in super-imposed terraces, seem to swell out under the impact of the explosion and are seen immediately afterwards to crumple up in a vast cloud in which everything is jumbled in one terrific heap—crumbling walls, twisted metal rafters, segments of partitions, roof-slates half pulped to dust, multi-coloured splinters and shreds of furniture and tapestry, piles of ashes and dust covering the mangled bodies of men, women and children. Usually these built-up areas are in the immediate vicinity of stations, gas plants, electricity works, military barracks, shops, factories and ports—the latter being the favorite target of enemy bombers. I have seen with my own eyes on the Ligurian coast, which is one continuous line of human habitations—Sanpierdarena, Nervi, Santa Margherita, Rapallo, and then on right down to Spezia—coastal batteries badly camouflaged in the midst of civilian homes built facing the sea. These batteries might have fulfilled their purpose just as well on the hills to the rear of the towns, and houses would then not be exposed to the danger of attacks from the air. In my view it is a crime to mix up military defensive works with civilian buildings in which innocent people toil and suffer in patience, as was the case in Genoa and Naples. The Germans in Naples had established their Command Headquarters, their barracks, their arms dumps and even their powder magazines in the very places where so many innocent creatures lived in poverty. The result was that for those helpless people who barely knew about the existence of war there was added to the difficulties of eking out an existence the agonies of terror and sometimes even the horror of a violent death.

The bombings, which had made terrible gaps in our cities

and destroyed vast areas, brought as a sequel what was known as "dispersal." When I arrived in Italy the term was on everybody's lips. Dispersal is the tragic antithesis to urban congestion. It recalls the days of the sacking of Rome or of the plague in Milan, when to escape persecution or death, the people fled in terror and scattered into the neighboring countryside. The "dispersees" are the inhabitants of the stricken cities, unable to live any longer in the midst of bombardments, either through fear or because they are homeless. Genoa, Turin, Naples and Milan, each in its turn, began to evacuate their civilian inhabitants. Nobody made any arrangements for the departure of those who fled from the bombings or for the provision of safe abodes for them. The Government took no interest in them, and the only thing it did was to set up a sort of mobile guard for the purpose of rendering help which was utterly inadequate and improvised. A financial compensation for those who suffered from the bombings worked out at 1,000 lira a head, a sum which, with the prevailing rate of values, would buy at the outside a couple of pairs of shoes. There were some people who had lost all their property and even all their clothing except their night apparel.

Every head of a family had to hunt round as best he could for a shelter for his wife, his children, his old parents, in some neighboring village or farm where they could live in comparative peace. Naturally the rich man could settle the problem with greater ease by drawing on his capital; but the ordinary wage-earner, without anything to fall back on, had often to be satisfied with just one room for six souls or more for whom he was responsible, and to thank God for having secured such a shelter. Then the wage-earner would take the first train every morning to go to the city to his usual place of work and in the evening, after his work was done, he would return to his family. To purchase the bare

necessities of life housewives were obliged to travel to and fro between city and country in trains packed to the utmost capacity, so that it was a strenuous job even to find standing room. Often it required an acrobatic feat to get into a railway carriage by way of the window. There were always hundreds and hundreds of travellers who were quite resigned to travel the whole way standing up in cattle-trucks.

The shelters that had been provided in the cities were few and inadequate. The authorities only started building the first big shelter in Milan in the Piazzo del Duomo in the spring of 1943, after the city had been half demolished in three big raids. As I travelled by all the various types of civilian transport I had an opportunity of observing the intensity of the exasperation of the people. There was nobody who did not grumble and protest. They all cursed Fascism. A little incident to which I was a witness in Milan is worth telling. An old man, tired and breathless, had succeeded in boarding a moving tram. Hardly had he done so when he ejaculated with a sigh of relief: "Bon Dieu de la France!" an expression which we Italians sometimes use too, and which is an alternative for "Thank God!" Hearing his exclamation, all his fellow-travellers looked at him with an air of questioning amusement, whereupon the man turned to the person sitting beside him and volunteered this explanation in a strong provincial accent: "Yes, the God of France! That's what I said. The God of Italy does not want to listen to us any more!"

Great God! What a dreadful time we are living in! Through sheer desperation the people cast aside all restraints, and deserve forgiveness in consideration of their privations and sufferings. During the course of a bombardment of Genoa, the Food Office was hit and thousands of ration books were buried in the debris. Later on, the street arabs were seen ferreting among the ruins and rooting out

bundles of new ration books, which they sold later on at bargain prices.

The food situation in Italy became desperate the moment rationing was introduced. The rations allowed were infinitesimally small. They started with the allowance of one egg per person a week, which was later reduced to one egg per person a month. The meat ration started at one hundred and fifty grams (about five oz.) and later dropped to seventy. A man had to exist for a whole day on one small loaf of bread. This was the greatest hardship of all, because the Italian people are great bread eaters, and can keep going without any other food provided they have bread. Potatoes were promised, but they never appeared on the market. After several months some potatoes were distributed in Rome only, but from supplies which had been rejected by the Germans as unsound. Fats had practically disappeared. Frascati wine, a local product, was un procurable in Rome, and in the restaurants you got only a small decanter of wine diluted with water, and not even every day at that. When fruit reached the markets in the mornings, it vanished almost immediately. It is a well-known fact that whenever there is a shortage of any commodity the need for it proportionately increases and the rush to obtain it becomes frenzied. I know that in certain Roman restaurants there are special days when all one could get was a plate of boiled beans or some other cooked vegetable without any dressing of oil. Prices had not increased very much, but the quantity of rations being insufficient, all people were obliged, whether they desired to do so or not, to have recourse to the black market.

In no part of the world during this war has the black market had such a vast and maleficent development as in Italy. It was not by any means a secret traffic, for everybody spoke about it and traded in it openly. The fact that there

were not many cases of death from hunger during this period was owing to mutual "arrangements" between all types of people. The technique followed was quite simple. The city worker, for instance, was obliged to buy all he could get in the country from the farmers who had big food reserves—a little fruit, a few eggs and a little cheese at a very high price. In order to meet this expenditure, which far exceeded his normal financial assets, he had to work a lot of overtime, and make petty deals in the black market himself.

The organization of food supplies had been placed by the Government in the hands of the corporative bodies and of the federal secretaries, who were incompetent and corrupt to the very roots of their hair. The Government had set up "accumulations," which entailed for all citizens the obligation to hand over to provincial or commercial harvest centers specified by the state all that they possessed in excess of their own proper share—for instance any flour they held in excess of their rationed allowance, and so on with other foodstuffs. Most of those who broke the regulations regarding accumulations lived in the country, and the authorities, knowing that the people in the cities used to go to the farmers and the rural factors to get foodstuffs that would otherwise go to the accumulations, had established controls at the customs offices, at the stations and even on the trains. When a purchaser in the black market was caught red-handed he was sent to the "confino," that is to say, a concentration camp set up for those who were perpetrating acts detrimental to the realm. The perfervid imagination of the Italian when he is in a tight corner is often unlimited. In Milan there lived a man who, not being able to use for his own needs the produce of his farm in Calabria, used to send from his country house to his city house every week a big parcel of what looked like clothes, but which actually contained nothing but foodstuffs. A

tailor in Genoa made suits free of charge, without coupons, in exchange for pork or other foodstuffs.

Anyone who was in Italy in 1943, up to the date of the fall of Fascism, knows that in the restaurants, even when the menu offered practically nothing, one could get a good square meal by bribing the waiter and being prepared to pay a bill that was ten times the normal one. The most characteristic thing about such a deal was that it was not secret by any means; its technique was known to the high priests of Fascism, like all the other breaches of the food regulations. The miseries of the day were the theme of general discussions, usually interlarded with a choice selection of invectives against Mussolini and the other Fascist leaders. You had only to travel from one city to another to hear some very colorful epithets showered on the Duce. The trains were always full of people saying a long litany of the evils that came in the wake of Fascism, starting with the extortions of the black market, and ending with the horrors of the war. The war they now regarded as a hopeless enterprise. Yet nobody had anything hard to say about the Allies. In one compartment, full of travellers of a very mixed type, a soldier, who was talking in my hearing of the adventures which he went through in Africa, referred to the English with a definite enthusiastic appreciation, while he condemned Germany and her allies with crude curttness. Opposite him was sitting an officer of his own army, who listened to every word. Nor did even one of the vast crowd of travellers protest.

Every morning the citizens saw scrawled on the walls in Rome sketches of Mussolini with the words, "Down with Mussolini!" in heavy blocked capitals underneath. The last trace of any regard for the man who had ruled Italy for twenty-two years had vanished. People asked one another where he was and what was the reason that he no longer

made any of his pompous speeches. It really looked as though he was deliberately avoiding them. In Government offices they said that he had retired to his Rocca delle Caminate, in the neighborhood of Forli. His extraordinary itch for appearing before the masses in quest of applause seemed suddenly to have vanished.

Alarming news came from the north of Italy. In several factories the employees had gone on strike, demanding better economic conditions. The increase in wages, which had been given after prolonged negotiations between the councils and the heads of the industrial concerns, was considered by the workers rather as an insult than an improvement. They wanted better rations instead of more paper money which had almost completely lost its value. In Turin several factories had to be closed. At Sesto San Giovanni, an industrial town near Turin, the operatives in a big factory, in addition to declaring a strike, threatened to destroy the machinery. The Fascist federal secretary had the utter tactlessness to send a detachment of militia to restore order. It was like pouring oil on a fire. Serious disturbances broke out, and the situation got worse and worse. When things were at their worst a major of the Royal Carabinieri came on the scene and appealed to the strikers in cool dispassionate terms to preserve the calmness so absolutely essential at such a critical national moment. It was only then that they calmed down, and, promising that they would follow his advice, resumed work, stating that in doing so they had not the Fascist regime in their minds. Already the sharp differentiation between the Monarchy and the Government, and between the Army and the Party, which was afterwards to culminate in the appointment of Badoglio as Prime Minister, was in the process of evolution.

I found, in short, an indefinable element of disorder in the atmosphere of the nation. When I reached Capri I said

to my wife, "The crisis is coming. I don't think the present state of affairs will last long. If the Allies were to land in Italy at this moment, they would find conditions most favorable for them." My forecast was perfectly correct. The Italian people had reached the stage when they were awaiting with impatience their own liberation with the aid of the Anglo-Saxons.

The bombings became more and more intense and heavy. Naples was bombarded for the seventieth time, I believe, while I was travelling on the line round Vesuvius towards Sorrento. In the clear bright light of the Parthenopian morning Naples, the dream city, looked battered with huge gaps of ruins yawning along the skyline of her divine crenellations. And yet, amidst this utter misery of desolation, the exquisite color scheme peculiar to Naples, the pearly cast of the crescent contours of her landscape, washed by an azure sea, stood out with pellucid clearness. The Neapolitan workmen had started the stupendous task of clearing away the wreckage which had been caused by the bombs. Birds were flitting with careless abandon among the melancholy ruins of a little church in Chiaia. All the buildings on the Via Caracciolo had their fronts badly damaged by bombs, and the glass had been shattered in every window in the city. The royal palace had been hit twice; the naval station had been levelled to the ground; the harbor had become a cemetery for ships, whose twisted funnels and splintered masts emerged above the surface of the water. The entrance to the harbor was so completely blocked up with the carcasses of ships that our little Capri steamer could not find a berth. The port itself was sadly reminiscent of Calais and Dunkirk.

Thousands of families were homeless, and forced to seek shelter in the grottos with which the hill is honeycombed, ancient grottos, with water dripping from the ceiling, where

in time of peace, pious souls were wont to resort to pay homage to the Blessed Virgin. The people of Naples lived in these caverns for months on end. Then one day a ton bomb fell at the entrance to one of them, shattering the hill and burying hundreds of people. There was an explosion on a tanker at the entrance to the harbor the repercussion of which caused dreadful havoc far and wide. Automobiles carried by another ship which blew up in the harbor were hurled, like chaff carried by the wind, onto the roofs of houses in Naples.

My boy had spent night after night in Capri, watching from our terrace which faced the sea the flights of Lancasters making for Naples, flying very low over the island. No bomb fell on Capri, despite the fact that we had in the island a few anti-aircraft guns, whose sites were childishly selected, and quite visible from above, notwithstanding the camouflage.

The English and American bombers changed their objectives from night to night. It was obvious that their zone of action extended from the South along the Tyrrhenian coast on a line parallel to the Appenines right up to Liguria. They started bombing Civita Vecchia on several nights in succession, and afterwards Grosseto, Leghorn and Spezia. In Spezia I saw where the station had been literally cut in two, but for all that the trains continued their journeys, only at a reduced speed, and they were very much behind schedule. In Leghorn the arsenal was hit, and on the following day Ciano came to tell us of the damage done to his city. In broad daylight they dropped hundreds of bombs in the pine forest of Viareggio. The reason for the attack was later revealed. It was owing to the fact that a German motorized column had halted in the pine forest. The English had evidently marvellously good information, the only snag

about it being that their raid was a few hours late, the column was on its way before the bombs fell.

Faced with this unchallenged dropping of bombs along the peninsula and the feelings of panic with which the people reacted to it, the Fascist Government hit upon the notion of inventing explosive fountain-pens. The newspapers talked about fountain-pens and lipsticks for ladies which the Allied airmen had dropped among the cities of Central and Southern Italy in order that they might explode in the hands of those who picked them up. There were front-page illustrations of babies killed in this way, and an appeal was made for the world's verdict on those alleged atrocities. Mussolini imitated Hitler's technique in trying to bring odium on his opponents. But after some time this propaganda campaign fizzled out, and nobody referred any longer to the explosive pens, because, starting with the Italian people themselves, everybody saw that it was just a mere fabrication.

There was a good deal of talk about proclaiming Rome an "open city." It was realized, of course, that Rome might one day become a target for the R.A.F. The Fascist Government would have been very glad to proclaim Rome an open city, more, I believe, through the anxiety of the hierarchs of the Party and all the other high-placed officials for their own safety than to save from destruction imperishable archaeological monuments, churches and museums, which contained priceless treasures. But nothing was done, because the Germans insisted on keeping in the city all their military and diplomatic headquarters. The German Command, as I observed, had not only reserved a large number of rooms in the Roman hotels for the German officials passing through, or resident in Rome; but they were now in the habit of posting on their walls the orders of the day in the German language, just as though they were in

barracks. The office of the German military attaché, who could not make up his mind to forego the amenities of the city, had become a second Ministry of War. The majority of the members of the garrison and the German officers had taken complete possession of the town of Fascati near Rome. The question of making Rome an "open city" continued unanswered, notwithstanding the persistence of the Vatican in raising it again and again, and the pressure brought to bear in support of its plea.

On various occasions there were incidents which showed the exasperation and indignation of the people. There were fights, for instance, at public meetings or in the streets, between Italian and German soldiers. This was invariably occasioned by the provocative attitude of the Germans. One such scene took place in a train between officers of the Italian army and representatives of the Wehrmacht, and the Germans were ordered to leave the vehicle on the charge of a breach of the laws of hospitality. A leading Italian official took the opportunity to express his anxiety about the state of tension that existed between the people and the German soldiers.

On one occasion when delivering a speech in a Roman social center, Signor Guariglia, who had been an Ambassador, expressed very courageous opinions with regard to the policy of the Axis, in words which were calculated to produce a profound impression in political circles. He put his finger on the sore spot when he asserted that it had been a fatal error to drag Italy into a path which served German interests alone. As Guariglia was highly esteemed in diplomatic circles and held a position of great repute there was no unpleasant sequel to his outburst against the Germans.

On another occasion, during the course of a Fascist meeting, Bottai, the Cabinet Minister, had to cease talking

owing to the frenzied interruptions of the audience, who bawled: "Fork out your millions! We want to see the millions you've got!" Bottai made futile attempts to explain that he was not a millionaire.

A rumor went the rounds that Mario Appelius had been thrashed, but when I met him in the office of the Stefani Agency he showed his usual effrontery and vented his anger against the English and the Americans, declaring, among other things, that he would remain faithful to the Italian lira, even if its rate of exchange had fallen so low that it became worthless. For myself, however, I am convinced that Mario had put by a fairly considerable sum of foreign money as special correspondent of the *Popolo d'Italia*. But it was a sight worth seeing to watch his ferocious frown whenever he spoke about Churchill. When and why this Italian journalist with the strange name and the mysterious origin became such a pro-German and champion of Mussolini I could not say. I am told, however, that during his career as a travelling journalist he took some extraordinary liberties with facts. They say, for instance, that during the war in the West, he coolly invented for the *Popolo d'Italia*, a naval battle on the Zuidersee, a vivid description of which he wrote while sitting in his arm-chair in a hotel in Brussels. I know quite well that later on, when he was in safety in Switzerland, he continued to describe battlefields which he had never seen.

From observing such an unhealthy form of society, a form so corrupt and so unnatural, as well as from the expression of outraged popular feeling, I deduced that there would be a revolution in Italy sooner or later. The most my imagination could conjure up was a kind of internal revolution for the purpose of scattering the whole band of Mussolini's confederates. I could picture to myself a sort of a Saint Bartholomew's Night for the elimination of those

whom the voice of the people pointed out as the war profiteers and the blood-suckers of the nation. Putting it bluntly, could it be explained how one of these hierarchs, who started in 1924 as a simple official of the Fascist Federation, should in 1943, that is to say, barely nineteen years later, have managed to pick up the neat fortune of 300,000,000 lira? Incidentally, it is interesting that these men who attained wealth through Fascism began to reproach one another for their wealth.

At a pre-arranged moment Mussolini appointed Carlo Scorsa of Lucca, formerly a member of the Directory, and known for his excellent relations with the Brown House in Munich, as general secretary of the Party. Hardly had Scorsa taken up office, when he made a gesture of desiring to introduce a little order into the ranks by adopting a policy that appeared puritanical. To this end he published very draconian circulars, but he did not succeed in securing the adoption of a system of Socratic life on the part of the chief exponents of the Party. Nazi technique was discernible in the plan adopted by him for the purpose of reorganizing the Fascist ranks. He put notices in the papers that he was moving from the sumptuous Palazzo Littorio, the seat of the Party on the outskirts of Rome, to Piazza Colonna in the heart of the city, in order to have continuously under his eye the herd entrusted to his direction and supervision. His purpose was to give the impression that the régime of simony was ended, and that from that moment the nation would be ruled with greater justice and seriousness.

Even granting that this repentance was genuine, it was belated. The Italian people could no longer be deceived. Their tolerance had reached the limit. To the minister, Polverelli, who asked what impression had been made on me by those few days I had spent in Italy, I had to reply candidly, "The impression of a country dominated by cor-

ruption and lack of conscience. If things go on like this, collapse is certain." As though to substantiate this view, Morgagni, when saying good-by to me before I left for Stockholm, said, "Days of hardship are ahead for Italy!"

If I had only known! Our peninsula seemed to me to have lapsed into a more chaotic and serious state than in 1921, when, owing to the activities of the Communists, there were strikes and industrial troubles all over Italy. Our people seemed to me to be on the point of awakening from a comatose condition to drift right into rebellion. Had the Allies, during those days, kept up a more intensive system of bombing throughout the peninsula, the purge would have come earlier, perhaps even in June. Paradoxical though it might appear, those bombings, lamentable as they were, inasmuch as they took such a toll of human lives, seemed after all, to have a salutary effect, for they helped to arouse the numbed conscience of the Italian people, which had been weighed down for twenty years under the Fascist yoke. The masses never referred to Fascism now, except to curse it. The régime made desperate efforts to defend itself through the proclamations issued by Sforza. One got the impression of a mortally wounded snake whose head and tail, in a last convulsive twitching, might still seem to retain a little life. Even if Mussolini at that moment had made any effort whatsoever to regain his country's confidence he would not have succeeded, because the damage that had been done was irreparable. But he did nothing. He did not ever appear in public, nor did he give the slightest indication of interest in what was happening.

On July 10 the two dictators north and south of the Brenner Pass must have felt as though they were turned to stone. What they had thought impossible had actually occurred. The Allies had landed in Sicily. By their successful landing the Anglo-American armies had shattered the myth

that the continent was impregnable. Once they set foot on Sicilian territory the Allies had invaded Europe. The man who thought himself greater than Charlemagne must for the first time have been uneasy—to say nothing of his shadow in Italy, Mussolini, who certainly must have felt the ground on which he stood giving way. All attempts to hurl back Eisenhower's armies were in vain. The Allies kept broadening more and more the bridgehead which they had made until they had completely conquered the island.

Hitler and Mussolini most decidedly did not foresee that the Sicilians would receive the English and Americans not as enemies but as brothers. There were heads of local bodies who conveyed to their liberators the feelings of gratitude of the people whom they represented. Italian officers and men threw away their arms and surrendered, not through cowardice but because they were waiting for that climax for a long time.

At that terrible moment Mussolini knew that his cause was irretrievably ruined. Fascist Government circles lost their heads. The only measure they could adopt was to hide from the public the ovation given by the Sicilians to the Allies by deliberately stating the exact opposite to what actually occurred, and asserting that the people of the island "had heroically resisted the enemy." Afterwards, when it was no longer possible to suppress the truth, they declared that Sicily's healthy patriotic instincts had been corrupted by Separatist elements. The reports that Kesselring sent to Berlin about the attitude of the Italian soldiers and people, and on the military situation in general, caused the German Government to look upon the war from that moment as an exclusively German affair, without counting any further on Italian support. It was reported from various sources that Kesselring advocated the occupation of every part of the peninsula by German troops so that they could

have a free hand in preparing the defensive measures that were necessary to halt the advance of the Allies.

It is very important to make clear that the idea of an occupation of Italy, perhaps merely on military grounds, occurred to the Germans when they saw that the Italian people were no longer on their side, and that Mussolini had lost all control over the nation. Berlin pretended to justify this occupation by asserting that it was forced on Germany unexpectedly by the conclusion of the armistice which Badoglio signed. But despite all German contentions to the contrary, the occupation was planned in advance.

As for the Italian people, they knew so well the perfidious intentions of their alleged ally that they were anxious that the English and American forces should not lose time in continuing at high speed their advance in Italy. This attitude was the reaction of the sufferings endured by the Italian people during years of mortification. There was no town throughout all Italy which did not feel a thrill of renewed hope and courage in hearing that the Allies were on our soil.

Mussolini was obliged to invite Hitler to a new conference, which was held in secret at Feltre. No bulletin was issued after their meeting. The two chiefs disputed for three hours over a problem which had no solution. Mussolini demanded more generous military assistance, failing which he claimed that the peninsula could not hold out. He and Hitler vied with one another in abusing the Italian army, and the generals in particular, whom they described as either incompetent or saboteurs. Mussolini added that Germany, after all, had the same interests as Fascism in fighting for the Italian peninsula, the ante-chamber of Central Europe. But Hitler replied that he could not withdraw any troops from other fronts. Mussolini pleaded and threatened, but to no purpose. Meanwhile the Allies had already

crossed the Straits of Messina, and were advancing in Calabria.

The rest belongs to the history which is known to all. A party comprising high officials of Fascism had been formed in Italy, it is not clear whether unknown to Mussolini or not, but at any rate without the people having any voice in it. Its chief spokesmen were Dino Grandi, President of the Chamber of Fascios and of the Corporations, and ex-Ambassador to London; with him was Luigi Federzoni, ex-Nationalist and President of the Royal Academy. It is not known who were the other constituent members of this group, but it seems certain that among them were the two surviving quadruplets of the march on Rome, Marshal de Bono and Signor de Vecchi, the Cabinet Minister, as well as various heads of the Fascist confederations. For some time since the fall of Tunis this group had tried to prevail on Mussolini to summon the Grand Council of Fascism, which, next to the Crown, was the chief factor of the Constitution. But Mussolini would not hear of it, insisting that in wartime discussions by the members of the Grand Council were both superfluous and inopportune.

The group renewed their efforts when the Allies landed in Calabria, but once again Mussolini was obdurate. In taking this stand, he was acting unconstitutionally, for it was the absolute right—and even the duty—of the Grand Council, as the chief organ of the Constitution and as the supreme tribunal of the Party, to express its views on a question which concerned the life or death of the nation. The names of the two movers of the proposal to summon the Grand Council, Grandi and Federzoni, should not have raised suspicion in Mussolini, as they were old Fascists who had always been faithful to the cause, but he was afraid.

On the Duce's return from the meeting at Feltre, Grandi succeeded in convincing him of the need of the proposed

summons of the Council, declaring that it would be in the interests of the Duce himself, as the Grand Council would be in a position to help him to regain his lost prestige.

The Grand Council met on July 25. Mussolini, so the chronicles say, entered the chamber with a challenging expression on his countenance, determined to exterminate his opponents. He spoke for several hours, giving an account of his conversation with the Fuehrer and making a statement on the military situation. When he spoke offensively about the army, Marshal de Bono arose, red in the face, and, taking a revolver out of his pocket, he placed it before him on the table, shouting: "I won't permit any references to the army." But Mussolini went on talking, and took no notice of the old quadrupvir. He said that he had not succeeded in inducing Hitler to send reinforcements for the defense of Southern Italy, which he now proposed to abandon to the enemy in order to concentrate resistance in Central and Northern Italy. The sacrifice of Calabria, Puglia, Lucania and Campania seemed inevitable, in order to avert a greater loss. He was convinced that the enemy could be checked on the Apennines in Latium and Abruzzi, and even ambushed. He did not seek a vote of confidence, because under Fascism, it is not the custom.

I followed the discussion, which became more stormy and tensely dramatic from minute to minute. The newspapers have reported Grandi's terrible indictment and the observations made by others such as Ciano and de Vecchi. Beside himself with frenzy, Mussolini interrupted each of them. To Grandi he said, "How often have you come to me begging me to give you new titles of nobility?" He taunted Ciano with these words, "I had a suspicion that you were a traitor from the moment you entered my family." Meanwhile he kept tapping a document which he had in front of him in which, according to his assertion

there was sufficient evidence to send everyone of his adversaries to the gallows. Pareschi, the Cabinet Minister, fainted dead away. De Vecchi kept shouting, "I knew that Mussolini would ruin us all."

Just then an usher tip-toed into the chamber and whispered in the ear of Bottai, the Cabinet Minister, that he was wanted on the telephone. Bottai rose and left the chamber, an incident which sufficed to make Federzoni suspicious. He scribbled a hurried note which he handed round to his friends. It ran, "Look out. They are preparing to do us in."

At the beginning of the session Roberto Farinacci had moved that the Grand Council should be requested to decide that the general command of all operations in Italy should be entrusted to the Germans. During the course of the discussion he never opened his mouth, nor did he rise to elaborate his proposal, but, taking advantage of the uproar around him, seized the opportunity of leaving the chamber by a narrow staircase which had been reserved for the Duce. It transpired later on that he hurriedly fled to the German embassy where arrangements were made to enable him to get away to Munich by a German plane.

A vote was taken on Grandi's motion and passed, requesting Mussolini to resign his authority into the hands of the King.

It seems pretty clear that up to the very moment of his arrest, which took place after his conference with the King, Mussolini thought he could master the situation. His whole attitude during the meeting of the Grand Council and during his altercation with the King showed that he thought himself strong enough to come out on top. He paid no attention to the Grand Council vote, and when Victor Emmanuel informed him that he had appointed Badoglio in his place as Prime Minister, still kept up his defiant attitude;

as though he were in a position to assert his own authority. Apparently, he depended on the police and the militia, two forces which were decidedly powerful and might be regarded as a supplementary army to the regular army.

But Fate had evidently abandoned Mussolini for good and all. The message which had been telegraphed by Galbiati, Commander-in-Chief of the Militia, a member of the Grand Council and fully trusted by the Duce, to all branches of the militia to consider themselves as mobilized to come to Mussolini's aid, was intercepted by Senise, the police chief, who substituted for it one which gave exactly the contrary order—namely, to obey Marshal Badoglio's orders from that moment.

The very last scene had a melodramatic tinge. The whim of destiny decided that Mussolini's crash should come a few days before his birthday. Unaware of what had happened, Hitler sent him, as on other occasions, a birthday present. This time it was an edition of Nietzsche, the German philosopher who had evolved the idea of the Superman, and whom Mussolini had throughout his life kept before his mind as an evangelist.

And so, after twenty-two years of undisputed authority a powerful man came to an abrupt end, as ignominiously as a thief laid by the heels just after he has picked a pocket. The Duce was arrested on leaving the Royal Palace, thrown into a car and imprisoned in a barracks in Rome. Nobody made the slightest protest. The Party made no move. For the rest, if we wish to go to the root of the matter, it was the Party itself that overthrew him and in a most constitutional manner, after that meeting of the Grand Council. If he was arrested, it was because, despite the sovereign decision of the supreme organization of the régime created by himself, he refused to resign. Mussolini fell, branded by the stigma of condemnation by the Party.



## XII. TOWARDS THE FUTURE

EVENTS AFTER THE CRISIS OF JULY 25 MOVED AT A PRECIPITOUS pace. The most important and epoch-making incident was the armistice with the Allies signed by Marshal Badoglio on September 3 and proclaimed to the people on September 8. This armistice echoed the feelings of the whole nation. The only pity was that it was not made sooner—that is to say, immediately after the downfall of Mussolini. Had that been the case, the Italian people would have been spared the painful experience of the revenge which Germany subsequently took..

The headlong collapse of Mussolini and of Fascism meant the unexpected and inglorious end of the Axis, and likewise a slap in the face for Hitler and the Nazis, who saw in the disappearance of the Fascists the removal of a handy instrument for the exercise of their domination over Italy. The Axis, as the Italians learned later, had no other aim but that of obedience to the obscure aims of German expansion. By means of the Axis Hitler was in a position to blackmail Italy. From the day on which Fascism started to imitate the goose step of Hitler's Brown Shirts, it was nothing more than a servile accomplice in the conspiracy against Europe. But now all that was at an end.

There was more involved, however, than the end of the Duce's régime. The unexpected collapse of Mussolini showed the brittleness of dictatorships of the Fascist type which were self-styled dynamic institutions—a brittleness that was demonstrated in the fact that they were always on the lookout for adventures and for war. It is easy to discern in Mussolini's collapse a stern warning to the Nazis and their leader, who will come to the same end as the Fascists did.

These were the joint motives that caused Hitler to hurl himself with diabolical frenzy on the festering and bleeding body of Italy in order to rend it to pieces. He cynically tried to justify his occupation of Northern and Central Italy on the grounds of the armistice which had been secretly concluded by Badoglio. But the world must know by now that the occupation on which Hitler had decided a long time previously, would have come, even had there never been an armistice. The material reasons for such an occupation had long been in existence, and only awaited the logical deduction. The ground was prepared; all the Italian bases had been in German hands for over six months. Furthermore, Mussolini invited Hitler to send anti-aircraft divisions into Northern Italy and the rest of the peninsula in 1942. This was the climax to the complete absorption of Italy in the German defensive organization. When he could no longer avoid doing so, Hitler threw away the mask, and all he had to do was to reinforce the garrisons already in existence. As a crowning insult he appointed Rommel commander of the Italian defense.

It is a mistake to think that there was any altruistic purpose in all that Hitler did to restore Mussolini and Fascism to power, not even the dramatic incident of the liberation of Mussolini. Hitler's aim was twofold—to keep the Anglo-

Saxons as long as possible from German territory, and to humiliate Italy.

Italy in these days has assumed the appearance of a vast area of wreckage which the murderous engines of war continue to batter persistently. There has been a reversion to the Middle Ages, when the peninsula was the theatre of battles between armies that were not of Italian nationality; but while the army advancing from the South under the British and American flags has undertaken a task of liberation, the other, coming down from the North, is inspired merely by a sadistic, savage and sanguinary thirst for destruction.

After his fall Mussolini no longer existed except for the very small number of men who stubbornly proclaimed themselves his followers, most of them being haunted by the dread of the inevitable punishment that awaited them for their serious crimes. The Duce was a man irremediably broken. It was not only his ailments and mental worries that made a physical wreck of him, it was worse than that—he became an utter moral wreck. Had I not known the man personally, I would not make these assertions, but as his disposition, his nature and his mentality were well known to me, I believe that Mussolini, as soon as he lost his spiritual and moral driving forces, became a mere automaton, a puppet in the hands of those whose interest it was to foster the illusion that he was still able to be a menace. Those who pulled the strings to make the puppet dance were the Nazis and a few Fascist leaders.

For instance, there was Roberto Farinacci, the most prejudiced of all the satraps of the Littorio, the man who, in the middle of the stormy session of the Grand Council on July 25, decamped by stealth and placed himself under the protection of the German embassy. He was the only one to whom such an idea occurred, the only one who went

to the length of proposing that the supreme command of the war in Italy should be entrusted to the Germans. While almost all the others placed themselves under the jurisdiction of the Badoglio Government, Farinacci was safe in Germany, only returning to his native Cremona when he was certain that with the presence of the Germans his skin was no longer in danger.

I have notes of the journeys Farinacci had made so frequently to Germany, as far back as 1939, as well as the contacts he made with the Nazi Government offices—often without any authorization from Rome. He constituted himself, indeed, a second Minister of Foreign Affairs, an “outside” one, as Ribbentrop had once been in Germany, before he actually entered the offices of the Wilhelmstrasse. In my view, Farinacci is a man who entertains hopes that he will succeed to the dictatorship in the event of Mussolini disappearing. For the time being he has to lie low, because he cannot yet show his hand, and is not sufficiently popular among the few Fascists still left.

Another man actuated by the surge of ambition, as well as of personal rancor, is Marshal Graziani, who may be summarily dismissed as being as much a physical and moral ruin as Mussolini. He has decided to fight for Fascism, not through love of it, but merely that he may be in the opposite camp to Badoglio, whom he envies and detests.

As I write this the Italian people are still undergoing terrible sufferings. It is agonizing even to think of what is going on in my country at this very moment. Thousands of Italians are forced to live in hiding in order to avoid arrest by the Nazis, and are being sent to concentration camps in Germany. They comprise soldiers who have been left without officers, civilians who have tried to check the murderous design of the German army of occupation, and members of the intelligentsia who have always fought

against every manifestation of Fascism. Their only escape is to hide in the valleys of the Appenines, in the crags of the Alps, their clothes in tatters, and depending on the peasants to bring them, at the risk of their own lives, enough food to keep body and soul together. The risk these peasants run is a sterling testimony to the character of the Italian people. They show their solidarity with the fugitive patriots who are hiding from the German bullies, but they evince no trace of sympathy with the Fascist chiefs whom Badoglio, as a tribute to justice, was forced to send to prison. In Turin, in Milan, in Bologna, in Rome, these Fascist chiefs demanded that their meals should be sent in to them by restaurants outside the prison walls, but every restaurant, without exception, has refused to serve them.

To give some idea of the inventive genius of the Italian in the epic fight which he wages in these days against oppression the following episode will suffice. Before the coming of the Allies, the people of Naples collected arms secretly in order to drive the Germans out of their city. In view of the rigorous scrutiny which the Germans exercised over every movement of the civilian population, these arms were usually conveyed to their destination in coffins, and the Germans never suspected that when they saw a funeral passing through the streets of Naples, it was really a consignment of rifles and hand-grenades on their way to a secret destination.

After Naples had been set free by the Allies, the Nazi bullies transferred their campaign of torture and pillage in the direction of Rome. A letter written by a Roman woman to her son who lived abroad shows how the people of Central Italy viewed the future: "Our lives have become a real hell, we have absolutely nothing left to us. The Germans take everything for themselves. This morning ten more wagonloads of flour were sent from our neighborhood to

Germany. All this flour given to us by the good God is taken from us, and the latest thing we hear is that the bread ration in Germany has been increased. In order to keep their jobs, Italians who are not Fascists are forced, under penalty of arrest, to sign a declaration of fidelity to Fascism and to Mussolini. They have taken our best men to Germany. They have filled the prisons. And then they leave us without anything. They say that we shall have no coal this winter. Under these conditions, deprived as we are of everything and above all, of our liberty, all we can do is to stay in bed, and, if the Allies do not come in time—wait for death!"





